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Mimesis and Poiesis in the Novel: William Faulkner's "Go Down, Moses" and the Mythopoeic Turn in the American Imagination.

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***Mimesis* and *poiesis* in the novel: William Faulkner's "Go Down,
Moses" and the mythopoeic turn in the American imagination**

Connell, Paul Richard, Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1993

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MIMESIS AND POIESIS IN THE NOVEL:
WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *GO DOWN, MOSES*
AND THE MYTHOPOEIC TURN IN THE
AMERICAN IMAGINATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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Preface

When I first undertook this project, I proceeded from an intuition about Faulkner and his role in reevaluating the novel. It is a commonplace of criticism to assign Faulkner a central position in modernism and in the innovation and development of the form of the novel. Yet, despite the substantial amount of criticism that explicates his intimate association with modernism's various trends, I detected some other movement occurring in his work that was not fully accountable in the modernist paradigm. The study of recent African-American and Latin-American authors and their invocation of Faulkner's influence made me take a second look at him and the novel in light of this new canon of opinion.

In this process I discovered a "cosmos of my own" and uncovered a shift in the novel which Faulkner was instrumental in effecting but which was only detectable in hindsight through the lens of the contemporary novel and its attendant commentary. In sources as various as Toni Morrison, Carlos Fuentes, Edouard Glissant, and Milan Kundera, and in older authorities including the German Romantics Schlegel and Novalis, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Walter Benjamin, I discovered intellectual and cultural affinities which had either direct or indirect application to the novel. Among these novelists and theorists I found a common and almost naive optimism about the novel and culture, a disposition all the more surprising considering the suffering at the hand of the political that many of these same figures

had endured. It is to generalize only slightly to say that they all agree in the novel's capacity to recreate and renew the human image and to assist in cultural formation. This activity of reimagining a people and reassessing their collective story has been the special role of the novel in culture, a duty performed in the full recognition of the negation of that desire by the political order.

This attribute of the novel to set forth, however tentatively and provisionally, an image of life where all can participate and tell their story is intensified and tested most thoroughly in America where the cultural aspirations of the novel are the most ambitious, and the realizations, perhaps, least tangible. The novel has sought to embody, however imperfectly, the hope in a common cultural consensus about value, a hope realized not in the domination or privileging of one discourse over another, but a discursive system where all may participate in an "open unity" and an ecumenical consciousness. I do not, however, invoke the dream of a harmonic totality, a dream by which the American imagination has been led astray. Yet it may have been precisely due to this nostalgic passion about its own origins that the American imagination was forced to counter the possibility of the disintegration of reality as it announced itself at the end of modernism. For whatever reason, despite the cold hand of politics, the novel retains this hope, and bestows a power which enables the world to denounce its own emptiness and disorder.

As I perceived this positive prescription in the novel, a fundamental distinction emerged out of the critical wilderness. To account for this shift from pessimism to hope, from history to the imaginary, a mimetic/poietic opposition seemed to be the pigeonhole that I needed to enable me to generalize my position. But as I fought to retain my categories, demonizing the former and valorizing the latter, there crept in the increasing realization that in the best novels, mimesis and poiesis successfully cross-fertilize each other and produce the novels that further the genre as a whole. The tendency that I earmark in these two categories remains valid, however: in Faulkner and in a strain of subsequent novelists the novel has moved away from a conventional sense of mimesis, or at least has modified it with a new mimesis which is more faithful to Aristotle's dictum. The concept of poiesis is similarly refined, having moved away from an understanding of the poetic act typified in Harold Bloom's invocation of the figure of the "strong poet," to a form rooted, not in the producer or the aesthetic object, but in the object of vision as it forms itself in the imagination of a culture.

In the mission of reenvisioning culture, the novel comes closest in its generic focus to the epic impulse, and in America this is manifested in the novel's primary intertext: the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament. The resurfacing of foundational narratives of a people on the landscape of the novel is manifested as a type of generic

atavism. However, this atavistic maneuver in the novel is not a "throwback," but a new genetic patterning that is part of the forward motion of the novel's cultural project.

In the struggle with the meaning of the novel and the new myth of America which it sets forth, I try to account for the multiple refractions and reverberations that the novel is sounding at the present time. The process of sorting through these sometimes mixed messages has been, at times, a bewildering task. Like the wedding guest in Coleridge's famous poem who is stopped and transfixed by the strange tale of the ancient mariner, I sense I am proceeding with the uncertainty and nervousness of anyone or anything poised on a threshold moment. Or like the young Isaac McCaslin pivoting between worlds, sensing the jittery juncture of history that the death of the bear Old Ben marks, one similarly understands with him that "[i]t was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except he would not grieve" (*Go Down, Moses* 226). The contemporary novel and its attendant criticism witness to the labors in this transitional process.

In my study, therefore, I explore some of the myriad assertions of contemporary novelists and theorists about the novel and uncover a canon of opinion which points toward a new poietic form of the genre. This examination proceeds on two planes: I will try to show how one model of writing and understanding the novel is in eclipse, and how another model, initiated by Faulkner and developed afterward, changes the

way we see the novel, its place in cultural history, and its capacity for representation and creation.

Chapter One introduces some of the attributes of this new novel: its atavistic nature, its poietic aspect, its allegiance to hope and affirmation, and puts forth a model of interpretation which tries to account for this new paradigm. Chapter Two discusses the unique possibilities contained in the American novel, its representational history in the novel/romance opposition, and the significance of the frontier in furthering a poietic model of history and culture. Chapter Three rehearses some of the major theories of the novel that we have inherited from modernity, most notably from Georg Lukács, the German Romantics, and Russian criticism, and sifts through the central points of these theories to determine their applicability to the novel after Faulkner. Chapter Four expands on the implications of this new theoretical paradigm and suggests the fruitfulness of the Bible as a ground for understanding the American novel. In Chapter Five, I give a reading of Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, a text which foregrounds this awkward shift toward a poietic model of the novel, and show how its meaning is enhanced when seen as a transitional document in the history of the novel and of America. In the Conclusion some of the components of a new novelistic paradigm are reviewed and the substance and relevance of a new "mythopoeic" worldview are considered.

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Abstract

In the course of its development as a genre, the novel shifted in the mid-twentieth century from a mimetic model grounded in imitation and colored with pessimism, to a poietic one based on discovery and novelty and foregrounded in hope. Precipitated by a crisis in representation after Joyce, the novel found in its own history, through the recuperation of older literary forms, new possibilities of representation, and shifted away from assumptions based on fact and history, to one grounded in miracle and myth. This shift was anticipated by the theories of the German Romantics Schlegel and Novalis and is adumbrated at the present time by theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin and novelists such as Italo Calvino, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, Salman Rushdie, and Toni Morrison. Together, the discoveries that these novelists and theorists uncover and develop run counter to many prevailing assumptions about the novel and to the dominant model of the modern novel propounded by Georg Lukács. Contemporary novelists are less concerned with modes of representation and imitation and the rendering of consciousness than discovering patterns of action made visible through the lens of fable, myth, and ritual. In this new paradigm, modes of power change, the range of representation is expanded, and the consciousness of time and history become refigured. Ancestral appearances surface in the novel, and in America, the Bible is foregrounded as a foundational narrative that simultaneously highlights the

form and comprehensiveness of the contemporary novel and presents a persistent subtext for many of its themes.

William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* stands at a crossroads in the development of the novel in America and in the world, as it manifests, in miniature, many of the concerns that are expanded upon in later works by contemporary novelists. Further, an understanding of *Go Down, Moses* is enhanced when seen in light of a biblical understanding of history and figural character formations. Finally, the novel in its development in America aligns itself with the epic and becomes the instrument of a new myth of the world, a mythopoesis, grounded in the simultaneous apprehension of time and space.

I. Introduction: The Novel as Atavism

The history of the novel is a history of redefinition. In surveying the criticism on the novel one might be tempted to conclude that it is not about anything in particular, but everything in general. It is an encyclopedia of culture, a register of where humanity finds itself at any particular point in history, a dictionary of a people's soul. It asserts its authority in a delirious range of concerns: ethics, money, children, domestic relations, the nation state, marriage, desire, historical consciousness, victimage, the unconscious, the rise of industrialism, the rise of the bourgeoisie, science, the city, estrangement, sacrifice, the loss of nature, literacy, imperialism, women, law, the police, oppression, utopia, the apocalypse. Novels are dizzying in variety and complexity, and if one reads too many of them, one could, like Don Quixote, go mad.

The novel as it has developed in Europe and its frontiers has uncovered unexpected levels of existence and has expanded the possibilities of representation. As Mikhail Bakhtin has noted, "Reality as we have it in the novel is only one of many possible realities, it is not inevitable, not arbitrary, it bears within itself other possibilities" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 37). In this assertion, Bakhtin seems to anticipate the strange and "marvelous" turns that the novel has taken in recent years. In observing that reality as it is articulated in any particular novel is only one of many possible realities, he reinforces the relativity of our

perceptions, and implies the openness to representation that is the hallmark of the genre. The novel, according to Bakhtin, is the only literary genre which is open-ended; it is the only genre capable of responding to changes in culture and nationality.¹

Unexpectedly, in the last half of the century, a surge of interest in the novel has injected new life into the genre and has revealed, in the process, a diverse range of voices, styles, and thematic concerns. The novel, which many had considered "exhausted" after Joyce, plumbed new semantic depths, and found in its own history the resources for new fields of representation. The novel has demonstrated this resilience in its continuous growth as a genre in the wake of modernism, extending its purview beyond the frontiers of Europe to become the dominant medium of expression and mode

¹There is a wide variety of criticism surrounding the novel, but relatively little devoted to an examination of its form. Chief among these include Georg Lukács's classic *Theory of the Novel: A historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature* and *The Historical Novel*; Mikhail Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination, Problems in Dostoevsky's Poetics*, and *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*; René Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*; and Milan Kundera's *The Art of the Novel*. There is a wide variety of criticism which examines the history of the novel; the most notable among these is Walter Reed's *An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Picaresque*. For an examination of the origins of the novel, see Marthe Robert's *Origins of the Novel* and Michael McKeon's *The Rise of the English Novel, 1600-1740*. The literary essay and the interview are important sources of insight into the novel, particularly in Latin America where they have become significant genres in their own right. The fragments and aphorisms of the German Romantics constitute the most significant body of critical commentary on the novel predating the twentieth century. Up to that point, the novelist's preface served as the site of critical contextualization.

Europe to become the dominant medium of expression and mode of cultural formation for communities acquiring a consciousness of themselves as a people.

This development has been evident in America where, in recent decades, we have witnessed the continued development of African-American fiction as well as the emergence of Chicano and Native-American writing. The contribution of Toni Morrison is particularly noteworthy and represents the most significant development in the novel in America since Faulkner. Latin America, first in the boom period with the accomplishments of Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and others, and now in the work of Isabel Allende, continues to be one of the most significant sites of novelistic expression. Throughout the world, new figures on the landscape have appeared: in French Canada, Gabrielle Roy; in the Arabic world, Naguib Mahfouz; in Eastern Europe (via Paris), Milan Kundera; in Southern Europe, Italo Calvino; in Africa, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o; in India (via London) Salman Rushdie; and in Japan, Yukio Mishima. Together these novelists represent a shift in the genre of the novel and in the method and substance of its representation.

Developing in tandem with the novel is a substantial field of criticism, much of it by novelists themselves. Taken as a whole, this new body of critical writing makes surprising and often unsettling observations about the novel and its role in culture. Contemporary novelists often deny

the expected influences, rebel against predictable conventions, and embrace a mode of representation which modifies significantly the inherited tenets of modernism. In my analysis I will first examine some of the statements by novelists about the novel with the aim of generating a new framework for discussion of the genre. This new frame I term *poiesis*. A common attribute among many of the novelists I have enumerated is the desire to move beyond conventional modes of representation and to bring a new world into being, to discover new patterns of action in an inherited history. These novels set forth a different version of events and tell a new tale about the heroic, and sometimes unheroic, deeds of a people. This new novelistic paradigm is set against an older type of novel rooted in *mimesis*. Mimesis as a dominant mode of representation seems to be eclipsed though not entirely discarded in this new manifestation of the novel. Mimesis is reabsorbed in a "novel" way, in a manner counter to its modern usage, more evocative of an older definition of the term. The contemporary novel, then, traverses and pivots between these two poles: the desire for a new creation embodied in *poiesis* and the representation of a familiar world represented in *mimesis*.

This movement is signaled in various ways by contemporary novelists and critics. The house of fiction, Henry James has told us, has not one window but a million from which to gain a perspective on experience. Isabel Allende extends the metaphor, expanding the boundaries of

representation even further, broadening in space and time the limits of our normal range of vision:

A novel is like a window, open to an infinite landscape...[In a novel][w]e can make excursions into the past, to try to understand the present and dream the future. In a novel we can use everything: testimony, chronicle, essay, fantasy, legend, poetry and other devices that might help us decode the mysteries of our world and discover our true identity. (45)

This freedom that the novel possesses is echoed by the critic Marthe Robert:

The novel can do what it wants with literature; it can exploit to its own ends description, narrative, drama, the essay, commentary, the monologue and conversation; it can be either in turn, or at once, fable, history, parable, romance, chronicle, story and epic. (5)

Unlike other genres, the novel acquires its vitality from a diversity of languages and utterances; indeed, as Mikhail Bakhtin asserts, its very form is linked to its dialogical method of accounting for experience.

But while the content of these utterances reverberates with the tensions of the present, the forms that these utterances take resonate deep into the past. When Allende and Robert assert that the novel can draw on testimony and chronicle, legend and fable, they are appealing to forms of discourse that had active currency prior to the onset of modernity. These literary forms went underground, so to speak, with the onset of the modern world, residing in the "alternate" discourses of folk traditions and marginal cultures. The novel at the present time recuperates these cultural forms and reintroduces them through what might be

termed a generic "atavism": the resurfacing of a lost ancestral line, exhibiting a face at once familiar and strange.

In his essay "The World and the Jug," Ralph Ellison responds to Irving Howe after Howe criticizes Ellison for not writing novels of "social protest" like those of Richard Wright. In his response, Ellison eschews Howe's typology of influence, and emphatically disavows Wright's spiritual paternity:

It requires a real poverty of the imagination to think that this [consciousness as a political being aspiring to a conscious eloquence] can come to a Negro *only* through the example of *other Negroes*, especially after the performance of the slaves in re-creating themselves, in good part, out of the images and myths of the Old Testament. (117)

In this statement, Ellison makes two central observations: he deconstructs a superficial notion of influence, noting that influences, and perhaps even the most productive ones, can come from outside one's immediate cultural boundaries; and, secondly, he reiterates the importance of the Old Testament in the ancestral imagination of African-American culture.

Ellison continues to distinguish between those influences that bore greatest significance to him and those which had accidental relevance; he draws a line between his "relatives" and his "ancestors." Wright, Ellison notes, may be one of his literary "relatives," but he is not one of his "ancestors":

But perhaps you will understand when I say [Wright] did not influence me if I point out that while one can do nothing about choosing one's relatives, one

can, as artist, choose one's "ancestors." Wright was, in this sense, a "relative"; Hemingway an "ancestor." Langston Hughes, whose work I knew in grade school and whom I knew before Wright, was a "relative"; Eliot, whom I was to meet only many years later, and Malraux and Dostoevsky and Faulkner, were "ancestors." (Ellison 140)

Ellison defies a literary determinism, and validates the artist's prerogatives in choosing his own literary models. In so doing, Ellison short-circuits Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence," the anxiety contained in furthering an unbroken genealogical succession of literary expression. The figure of the ancestor intrudes in a work unexpectedly and unpredictably; one's ancestors can cross historical and geographical boundaries and are often difficult to detect. Nonetheless, if we are to believe Ellison, these ancestral presences exert a profound influence on the poetic imagination of the novelist.

Toni Morrison builds on Ellison's insight and foregrounds the importance of the ancestor in African-American writing, albeit in a slightly different sense. For Morrison, the ancestor is a guiding presence, an "ancestral spirit" in the fiction itself, and not an influence on the novelist:

The presence of the ancestor...it seems to me interesting to evaluate Black literature on what the writer does with the presence of an ancestor. Which is to say a grandfather as in Ralph Ellison, or a grandmother as in Toni Cade Bambara, or a healer as in Bambara or Henry Dumas. There is always an elder there. And these ancestors are not just parents, they are sort of timeless people whose relationships to the characters are benevolent, instructive and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom. (Morrison, "Rootedness" 343)

In uncovering the place of the ancestor in literary expression, African-American literature is instructive not only in delineating a primary novelistic theme, but also in providing a new frame for the analysis of literary history and influence. The reappearance of the ancestor is not merely the appearance of a sage or guardian; the attention to the ancestor signals the larger atavistic power in the novel: the tendency, first of all, to draw upon unexpected influences, and, secondly, to recuperate an ancient past, a past revealed, not as the same version of the same old story, but the past as novelty and surprise. Morrison says further that the information that the ancestor possesses is not new information, but more ancient wisdom which announces itself in an unfamiliar way:

It's interesting--the concept of an ancestor not necessarily as a parent, but as an abiding, interested, benevolent guiding presence that is yours and is concerned about you, not quite like saints, but having the same sort of access, none of which is new information. It's just that when it come from discredited people it somehow has some other exotic attachment: thus the word "magic."
(Morrison, *Interview* 145)

Since the information that the ancestor possesses resides outside the expected sphere of influence and is spoken in a "discredited" voice, its content is "defamiliarized." Through its very strangeness it asserts itself as a poietic force on the present. Further, it is worth noting that the ancestor is not a "parent," but an ancient voice, forgotten in time, less like a reassuring paternal or maternal presence than the unsettling appearance of the dead.

Thus one might say that any ancestor exerts an unseen influence over the present; the ancestor deposits a trace which will be realized in the future. In extending the metaphor from the genealogical line to the generic line, the concept gains relevance in accounting for the unusual patterns in the novel's line of descent. In any novel, Bakhtin has noted, "[t]here always remains a surplus of humanness, there always remains a need for the future, and a place for this future must be found" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 37). The ancestral presence and the older atavistic residue of the novel are part of the surplus reserve in the genre. In this reappearance of the ancestor, therefore, the surplus of the past recurs as a type of atavism, similar in action to the reappearance of a genetic characteristic after a period of recession. This reappearance of the ancestor arrests a progressive view of development; it makes one stop and take stock of the movement in any dynamic pattern, whether it be in history, genealogy, or in the unfolding of a genre.

The concept of atavism is a curious and obscure one, and has merited almost no critical comment.² The most basic

²I appropriate atavism as a metaphor for explaining the presence of older characteristics and figures in the novel. It signifies the appearance of a forgotten ancestor and produces an unexpected and novel intrusion into the genetic line of descent. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines atavism as a "resemblance to grandparents or more remote ancestors rather than to parents." The root of atavism is the Latin *avus*, meaning grandfather. *Avus*, according to Robert K. Barnhart in the *Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology* is borrowed from Latin *atavus* meaning ancestor, a great-grandfather's grandfather, and is related to uncle, as in "avuncular" or "little grandfather" (60). In conventional usage, following an entrenched evolutionary model, the term

action in an atavistic maneuver is bringing the ancestor to the surface and giving a distant--not a recent--past new life. An atavism is never planned; when an atavistic characteristic appears, it comes as a surprise. The novel as it appears at the present time is fundamentally atavistic as it bears in its form older resemblances rather than recent developments. Bakhtin in his analysis of the novel repeatedly refers to Greek romances, Roman satires, Medieval fables, folktales, and even Socratic dialogues as sources of the novel. In addition, many of the tropes and motifs in novels recall older conceptions of terms rather than recent accretions. Thus, given an atavistic paradigm, it may be more fruitful to compare García Márquez with Rabelais rather than Carpentier, Morrison with Dante rather than Alice Walker. Similarly, in novel criticism, it may be more productive to recall Aristotle and Dante, rather than Forster and James. An atavistic paradigm creates a new field of relations and influences, a new realm of ancestral guides.

took on negative resonances, and has the connotation of a "throwback." The term had some currency in biological manuals during the Victorian period to describe manifestations in nature which seemed primitive to the bourgeois mind. Sherwood Williams in "The Rise of a New Degeneration: Decadence and Atavism in *Vandover and the Brute*," describes the late Victorian reaction to homosexuality as a type of atavism; the Victorian mind considered it a reversion to primitive sexual mores. My usage of the term is intended to be free of these negative resonances, however. The connections between atavism, and grandfathers and uncles in the complex web of kinship relations will be elaborated later in the discussion of *Go Down, Moses*.

The renewed vitality in the novel of the postmodern period has not emanated from a further exploitation of the modern project; the power of literacy, the examination of the self, and the definition of the nation state are not central concerns in the post-realist novel. Rather, the foundational narratives of a people, contained in older poetic forms, in sacred books, and in the renewal inherent in the text of nature itself are unexpectedly foregrounded. The new form of the novel calls upon forgotten strata of myth, ritual and games, strange and occult numerologies, older narrative forms, and a ghostly repertoire of figures of the wounded and victimized to breathe life into a form of the novel which was evolving into a rigid and stale neoclassicism where empty structures and formal prerogatives were beginning to seem more important than an integrated vision of literary form.

In giving expression to this still developing stratum of existence, the novel shed the skin of modernist aesthetics and largely abandoned realism--its metaphoric parent--as a technical and stylistic imperative. It has forged, instead, a new way of looking at the world and is now one of the keystones in the formation of a new cultural myth.

"Aristotle's poetics," Bakhtin states, "although occasionally so deeply embedded as to be almost invisible, remains the stable foundation for the theory of genres" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 8). As he makes this observation, Bakhtin calls for a rejection of Aristotle in reevaluating the novel, noting

that the idea of mimesis as it evolved in novel theory is inadequate to fully explain this strange prosaic creature. It is not surprising that Bakhtin rebels against Aristotle; this can be accounted for in part in Bakhtin's moving away from the tragic paradigm of the novel and rooting it in essentially serio-comic foundations. Notwithstanding Bakhtin's reservations, however, attention to Aristotle focuses the genre of the novel on its ability to represent and create: on *mimesis* and *poiesis*.

Part of the atavistic nature of the novel at the present time is the recovery of an older version of mimesis. Tragedy, Aristotle says in his famous dictum, is a mimesis of a *praxis*, an imitation of an action. But mimesis in the history of its evolution as a literary term, some critics contend, became encrusted with a series of resonances that were not a part of its original content.³ Even at the present time there is no consensus of opinion in the exact meaning of the term mimesis among classicists and contemporary theorists.⁴

³For a developed discussion of the transition from a classical understanding of mimesis to that which prevailed under nineteenth-century modernism, see Jan Bruck's "From Aristotelian Mimesis to 'Bourgeois' Realism." Bruck contends that Aristotelian mimesis was modified in the nineteenth century to complement a positivist epistemology and the demands of scientific objectivity.

⁴Paul Woodruff in "Aristotle on *Mimesis*" measures the inadequacy of the various interpretations of mimesis. Imitation, reproduction, fiction, representation, expression and image, he says, are all inadequate, finally settling on the term "functional deception" (91). Aryeh Cosman in "Acting: *Drama as the Mimesis of Praxis*" prefers the term "iconicity" which has a broader sense in both Aristotle and

It seems to me, however, that this crisis in meaning does not emanate primarily from mimesis, per se, but rather from the object of mimesis: praxis. The prevailing object of mimesis in the nineteenth century was social action or "historical faithfulness."⁵ But an older version of mimesis and praxis is articulated by Francis Fergusson in his

Plato: "For an understanding of ancient theories of mimesis, we may need to forsake faithfulness in order to reclaim the iconic sense of mimesis common to Plato and Aristotle" (55). The history of the term mimesis is developed by Mihai Spariosu in his Introduction to *Mimesis in Contemporary Theory: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. In his study he distinguishes between two forms of mimesis: "good" (faithful) mimesis as imitation and "bad" (unfaithful) mimesis as play. Spariosu sees the dominant interpretation of mimesis as imitation. A "counter-tradition" coalesces around the term as "free play," which Spariosu sees as a pre-Platonic idea, and which is the proper ancestor of much of contemporary deconstructive approaches to the subject of mimesis. Spariosu elaborates: "On the one hand, there is, in ritual and myth, mimesis as the non-imitative, ecstatic or 'dionysian' movement of Being, and, on the other hand, there is Platonic mimesis as the imitative, imperfect, or pale image of a no longer accessible or accurately representable Being; in other words, power conceives of itself first as spontaneous, free, or 'natural' movement (play), and then as Reason and Ideal Form, infinitely removed and inaccessible, but still negotiable as perfect copy" (iii). The latter view is essentially the neoclassical view, the view that came to dominate modernity, and to which I would attach Georg Lukács's approach to the novel. The way Spariosu defines "bad" (unfaithful) mimesis is closer to the romantic reception of the term, at once an atavism and the seed of a new mimesis.

⁵The major representative of this point of view is Georg Lukács in *The Historical Novel* where he says that the mission of the novel, as exemplified in Walter Scott, is not necessarily the details of history, but the inner mechanism of historical change. "Measured against this authentic reproduction of the real components of historical necessity, it matters little whether individual details, individual facts are historically correct or not" (59). The significance of Lukács and his concept of representation is developed further in Chapter 3.

Introduction to the *Poetics*: "By 'action' [Aristotle] means, not physical activity, but a movement-of-spirit, and by 'imitation' he means, not superficial copying, but the representation of the countless forms which the life of the human spirit may take" (Fergusson 4). Aristotle asserts that this mimetic quality is the basic attribute of all art, its most basic representative ploy. On the most reduced level, mimesis is what makes art art, and not reality. Praxis, on the other hand, the object of mimesis, is an activity characterized by an inner movement, a pattern that is revealed in the fragmentary and inchoate forms of life through the act of poiesis.

This interpretation of praxis as activity or movement, or as Fergusson has said, a "movement-of-soul," complements William Faulkner's own statement of the aims of the artist. In an interview with Jean Stein vanden Heuvel Faulkner states:

Life is motion and motion is what makes man move-- which are ambition, power, pleasure....

The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that 100 years later when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. (Faulkner, *Interview* 253)

The artificial means to arrest motion is Faulkner's own paraphrase of the relationship of mimesis and praxis, an interpretation which complements an older praxis based on activity, or movement, rather than historical change.

Contained in this new version of mimesis (which is simultaneously an older resonance) is a movement away from

art as aesthetic object and a refocusing of art as a created thing, a "poietic" object. Jacques Maritain defines poiesis as follows: "Poetry means first of all an intellectual act which by its essence is creative, and forms something into being instead of being formed by things" (Maritain 114). Central to Maritain's view of poiesis is its generative power; it "forms something into being," it "bodies-forth" a new creative event. Maritain's definition echoes Heidegger's in his sense of poiesis as a "bringing-forth":

Not only in handcraft manufacture, not only in artistical and poetical bringing into appearance and concrete imagery, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. *Physis* is indeed poiesis in the highest sense. (Heidegger 10)

And further Heidegger elaborates, "Bringing-forth brings hither out of concealment forth into unconcealment" (11). In both definitions of poiesis there is a bringing into being, the manifestation of newness, an expansion of the represented world.

The appearance of the ancestor resurrects mimesis as an image in flux, but more significantly, it intensifies the sense of poiesis as both a new and "old" event. It detaches poiesis from the subjectivity of the creator/artist and separates the poietic object from its immediate producer. The poiesis lies not in the original insight of the producer, but in the unconcealment of some other strata of life of which the artist may only be dimly aware, some buried truth for which the poet is simply the conduit. Where poiesis in a

more conventional usage implies the manipulation of a creative idea by one who possesses sufficient "genius," an atavistic type of poiesis ushers forth a creative insight free of subjectivity. In other words, the poietic artist gives birth not to his child of his mind, but to his ancestral body.

This movement from realism to post-realism, from mimesis to poiesis, marks a transitional phase in the novel's growth in America and is the central thread in a new novelistic aesthetic that this study will examine. Mimesis as the dominant presentational form of novelistic expression in the modern world essentially presents the novelist as imitating, demonstrating, representing, or counterfeiting; it mandates the verisimilitude and historical accuracy of the "well-made novel." Novels in this model are judged for their accuracy of insight and keenness of observation into the human psyche or historical condition.

A poietic theory of the novel on the other hand, presents the novelist as involved in a new creative event, the spontaneous generation of a new part of the world. The novel is not so much judged for its accuracy against a preexistent model, as accepted through the "willing suspension of disbelief" as a piece of reality in an ever-expanding orbit of novelistic truth.⁶

⁶This basic schema (the mimesis/poiesis distinction) is my own; for the exfoliation of my position, however, I am indebted to an essay by Frederick Turner "'Mighty Poets and their Misery Dead': A Polemic on the Contemporary Poetry Scene." For a hermeneutic approach to the reception of the

An exclusively mimetic theory views reality--or more specifically, history--as intrinsically self-generative; new ideas and cultural forms are invented and replicated; novelty is generated by the terrain of representation.⁷ But, as Paul Coates has noted,

The assumption that society is purely self-generating causes the...novel to ignore the return of the repressed in the unforeseen moments that question the continuity of a life, throw windows open on to other possible worlds: worlds governed by non-human orders, or by orders incomprehensible

concept of poiesis, see Hans Robert Jauss, "Poiesis." Jauss traces the concept from its usage in Aristotle and Genesis to Dada, from poiesis as *techné* to poiesis as shock. Jauss notes that the idea of making a "human world" is common to Aristotle and Genesis: "The process in which aesthetic experience discovers art as the sphere of creative originality and as the paradigm of the creation of a human world has the second [the first being Aristotle], no less significant, source of its legitimacy in the history of Creation of the Bible" (592).

⁷Alain Robbe-Grillet, who predicted the future of the novel in "From Realism to Reality" in his *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction* accurately sees the novel's move away from realism, but makes the mistake of thinking that the novel was going to progress on the lines of invention, that it was almost to be self-generative. Robbe-Grillet misses the poietic turn that the novel was to take: "Not only does each of us see in the world his own reality, but...the novel is precisely what creates it. The style of the novel does not seek to inform, as does the chronicle, the testimony offered in evidence, or the scientific report, it constitutes reality. It never knows what it is seeking, it is ignorant of what it has to say: it is invention, invention of the world and of man, constant invention and perpetual interrogation" (161). And Robbe-Grillet continues to forcefully propose the idea of self-generation: "To make something out of nothing, something that would stand alone, without having to lean on anything external to the work; today this is the ambition of the novel as a whole" (161). But, as Bakhtin reminds us, all utterances are populated with the intentions of others; all novels dialogically relate to other novels--and to other forms of discourse within themselves.

to men (as opposed to women) or to the men of a particular society. (1-2)

A self-generating model will not generate an ancestor insofar as its focus is the present field of relations. Taken as such, it has no repository for permanence except in history itself. If something is lost in history, it is irredeemably and hopelessly lost; there is no avenue of recovery and recuperation of a past except through a dimly apprehended memory seen through the lens of nostalgia. Contrary to this inevitably pessimistic view stands the figure of the ancestor and the hope of atavism. The ancestor plants a treasure in the past, a cherished deed which can always be recovered in the memory. The literary trope that governs the recuperation of these hidden orders embedded in history is the poietic.

Having said this, one must acknowledge that the poietic element was never completely excluded from the mimetic/historical model. Any work of art which is not purely documentary will be poietic; it will give a new version of events. In part, the element of poiesis in the mimetic novel was filled by "invention." Invention implies the outer manifestation of genius and ingenuity; it purports to be largely self-generated and self-replicative. But a truly poietic theory, as was noted, always brings something into being, guides the unknown into the realm of the known. This revelation may take the form of past misdeeds or past glory, future promise or anxiety, and the messengers may be as diverse as otherness itself: strangers at the gate,

uncanny apparitions, divine epiphanies, or unconscious desires.

The renewed activity in the novel follows upon an attention to "atavistic" concerns in modern poetry. Yeats and Pound, Hardy and Housman, all sought a cultural renewal based on the appropriation of older literary forms not unlike what is occurring at the present time in the novel. The contribution that the modern poets made in their examinations of the nature of culture and myth remains valuable for an understanding of the contemporary novel.⁸

Inevitably, contemporary poetry abandoned this aspect of the modern project (its Romantic side), and has seemingly, and perhaps ironically, reverted to more neoclassical novelistic models. This may have been in part due to the monological structure of poetry, as asserted by Bakhtin, as opposed to the dialogical form of the novel. Further, as Bakhtin has noted, "[t]he prose writer [the novelist] does not purge words of intentions and tones that are alien to

⁸One of Yeats's essays, "Magic," reads like a philosophical manifesto of the contemporary novel as it is found in Latin-American and African-American fiction. Yeats states: "I believe in three doctrines, which have, I think, been handed down from early times, and been the foundations of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are:--

(1) That the borders of our mind are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.

(2) That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.

(3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols" (28).

him" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 298). The novel seems uniquely suited to contain "alien tones" and the vast canvas of experience. As Milan Kundera has noted, the novel as a genre is distinguished by its capacity to revive and transform older beliefs and myths.⁹

This synchronicity is accomplished both consciously on the part of the novelist, and unconsciously through the particular mechanics of language and the progress of the genre itself, over which the individual novelist has little control. As Milan Kundera explains, "The novel's spirit is the spirit of continuity: each work is an answer to preceding ones, each work contains all the previous experience of the novel" (Kundera, *Art* 18). Bakhtin makes a parallel observation in his concept of genre memory: "A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning. Genre is a representative of creative memory in the process

⁹Kundera notes that the novel has its own "cemetery of missed opportunities"; it has neglected a significant range of experience of which he enumerates four major categories: the appeal of play; the appeal of dream; the appeal of thought; and the appeal of time. The novel is able to connect disparate levels of experience, divergent and often contradictory voices, and can recreate and unify these various aspects according to its own inner logic. Toni Morrison expresses similar sentiments in the novel's capacity for recovery and redress: "[I]t seems to me that the novel is needed by African-Americans now in a way that it was not needed before--and it is following along the lines of the function of novels everywhere. We don't live in places where we can hear those stories anymore; parents don't sit around and tell their children those classical, mythological archetypal stories that we heard years ago. But new information has got to get out, and there are several ways to do it. One is the novel. I regard it as a way to accomplish certain very strong functions--one being the one I just described" ("Rootedness" 340).

of literary development" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 106). Both Kundera and Bakhtin work against the tendency of originality and see the poietic potential in the contact of languages both within novels themselves and within the complex, often contradictory trends perceptible in the genre.

Seen in this light, the genre of the novel is not so much a static blueprint, nor a set of discrete developments, but as Frederick Turner observes, a "bundle of stored energy." Turner elaborates:

A great genre is not a set of rules but a bundle of stored energy that can be used in many ways..... Every great work transforms and even contradicts its genre; that is what makes it great. And the "stored energy" of a genre is the set of expectations and forms it contains, to be satisfied or deliberately violated. (80)

Genre is then not a logical category but an ontological image, revealed through the collision of intentions and languages. In the novel these tensions are manifested as a type of "discordia concors" where diverse materials are reworked into a poietic image. Only through the contact of languages, styles, national discourses, vernacular tongues, and official transmissions can the novel produce sufficient energy to insure its continued relevance and vitality.

Norman Simms's comments in his study of the interplay of languages in traditional and non-traditional cultures are instructive in this regard. Simms asserts that the interaction of languages, particularly the intersection of orality with literacy, and legend and folklore with

scientific discourse, sets off cultural triggers which allow marginal and minor literatures to flourish. Simms explains:

Metaphorically, then, these points of contact within the new and expanded *corpus* of verbal experience and critical, theoretical and methodological awareness will be located where new modes of literary discourse come into being. The specialized genres of cultural discourse, such as anthropology, psychoanalysis or autobiography can be seen as long, complex nerves running outwards from the spinal column of civilized literacy, outwards to the specific organs and limbs of cultural articulation. Where they knot creatively, we find these nodules of intense communication, these points of contact. (vii-viii)

These "nodules of intense communication" include memoirs, anecdotes, and testimonies, but preeminently they are novels: those points of contact among languages, which, taken as a whole, produce a poietic construction of the world. Contemporary novelists such as Salman Rushdie in *Midnight's Children* give abundant evidence of this energy and dynamism.

The novel, this most strange and mercurial genre, has a vexing lineage, and at this point it might be helpful to sketch a provisional typology of the genre. The novel does not possess only one genealogical line descended from a single parent; instead there is a complex family tree to the novel as it is found in Europe and America. When we look at the numerous examples of what we in the West have come to call novels, there are a number of different strains which can be identified. There are, first of all, genres which have taken a mimetic model:

1. The Novel of Reportage: This form marks the beginnings of the novel in the seventeenth century, and in its development, rises to the apex of the form in England. It draws on the epistolary forms and journalistic modes of production, and is marked by the influences of literacy and print culture: Richardson, Fielding, Defoe, Dickens.¹⁰

2. The Impressionist Novel: This form marks the height and development of realism, as it progressed toward increasing lyricism. The significance of the psychological life and its manifestation of styles which depict consciousness are central motifs. The faithful depiction of the outer world is transformed to the rendering of consciousness, with emphasis often placed on the gulf between the two: Flaubert, James, Joyce, Woolf.¹¹

3. The Tragic-Ironic Novel: The novel of historical consciousness, marking the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie and the formation of the nation. History is defined by mass movements. This has been the dominant strain in continental fiction: Balzac, Stendhal, Tolstoy, Mann.¹²

¹⁰The term "reportage," though in wide use, is extracted from an essay by Nathan A. Scott, Jr., "The Decline of the Figural Imagination." Scott cites the influence of Taine, the French historian, on the development of the novel, particularly in his pronouncement on the content of knowledge as the "factual." Scott states that "by the time of the Goncourts and Zola, the fascination with the fact had become a strict ideology requiring the novel to be a "slice of life" and to specialize in what the Goncourts called *reportage*" (16).

¹¹The term "Impressionist Novel" I take from an essay by Allen Tate, "William Faulkner 1897-1962." Tate remarks, "I believe that as his personality fades from view [Faulkner] will be recognized as one of the last great craftsmen of the art of fiction which Ford Madox Ford called the Impressionist Novel. From Stendhal through Flaubert and Joyce there is a direct line to Faulkner, and it is not a mere question of influence. Faulkner's great subject, as it was Flaubert's and Proust's, is passive suffering, the victim being destroyed either by society or by dark forces within himself" (163). I agree with the description of the category, and I do not deny that this element constitutes a significant portion of Faulkner's work, but my demarcation places Faulkner elsewhere.

¹²Lukács comments in *The Historical Novel* that the preeminent theme in the historical novel is the tragic

But in addition to these, there is also the other tradition--the poietic tradition of the novel--of which there are two major strains. Both of these genealogical lines evidence atavisms: in the Romantic-Fantastic Novel the ancestral presence reveals itself as the uncanny image; in the Biblical Novel, atavism lies as the foundational narrative itself, the "grandfather" of all poietic texts in the West.

4. The Romantic-Fantastic Novel: A form that developed in American and German Romanticism, it is distinguished by the intervention of strange and uncanny elements into the ordinary: Hawthorne, Poe, Hoffmann, Gogol, Kafka.

5. The Biblical Novel: A form of the novel peculiar to Russia and America, it is characterized by the absorption of disparate elements and themes into an imagined world that draws on metaphysical rather than epistemological concerns. It has as primary concerns the notion and efficacy of sacrifice, the nature of violence, the commerce of the domestic life and articulates the covenant that is given to a people. This has been the dominant form in the New World: Melville, Dostoevsky, Faulkner, Morrison, García Márquez.

The first three types, the Novel of Reportage, the Impressionist Novel, and the Tragic-Ironic Novel, mark the major strains in the European tradition of the genre, and collectively comprise what is known as the realist or mimetic tradition. The last two strains have always inhabited the borders of European consciousness, both literally and figuratively, and have been less well remarked, especially in

downfall of pre-capitalist cultures: "[The historical novel encounters] the fundamental problem of how a primitive society becomes infected by a more highly developed culture surrounding it, a tragedy of the necessary downfall of this entire formation" (74).

terms of the American tradition. The Biblical Novel, which I see as displayed in the American and Russian traditions, is perhaps the most unconventional and provocative demarcation, but it nonetheless constitutes a dimension which is central to an understanding of the American novel.

The novel, then, seems to be entering into a new phase of its existence. D. H. Lawrence has adumbrated this new role in an essay "Why the Novel Matters" published in 1936:

Now I absolutely flatly deny that I am a soul, or a body, or a mind, or an intelligence, or a brain, or a nervous system, or a bunch of glands, or any of the rest of these bits of me. The whole is greater than the part. And therefore, I, who am man alive, am greater than my soul, or spirit, or body, or mind, or consciousness, or anything else that is merely a part of me. I am a man, and alive. I am man alive, and as long as I can, I intend to go on being man alive.

For this reason I am a novelist. And being a novelist, I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are all great masters of different bits of man alive, but never get the whole hog.

The novel is the one bright book of life. Books are not life. They are only tremulations on the ether. But the novel as a tremulation can make the whole man alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book-tremulation can do. (535)

The novel, for Lawrence, is the only genre which possesses sufficient breadth to capture the whole of a human existence; it is the "book of life," not the record of death or a mere repository of the dust and ashes of the past--a "well-wrought urn." Lawrence makes high claims on the novel as a genre; as a novelist he considers himself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet. The novel can

capture the whole field of life, the "whole hog," and is the only medium which can cause a "tremulation" of historical life. In a world where the great authorities have departed, the novel fills the void and becomes the authoritative book. As Bakhtin reminds us, "The speaking subjects of high proclamatory genres--of priests, prophets, preachers judges, leaders, patriarchal fathers, and so forth--have departed this life" (Bakhtin, *Speech* 132). These voices become novelized as the novel subsumes the role of the epic bard, the figure who rehearses and validates the shared concerns of a culture, not from on high, but from below.

Culture, it could be said, proceeds on two planes: one smooth field of certitude and confidence; the other of second thoughts and misgivings; one the side of self-possession, of victory, and of historical guarantees; the other a stratum of dispossession, of victimage, and of exclusion. Milan Kundera divides the history of modern world into two analogous strands: one is initiated by Descartes, the another by Cervantes. The novel, therefore, contains half the story--the forgotten narrative of modernity. "If it is true that philosophy and science have forgotten about man's being," Kundera writes, "it emerges all the more plainly that with Cervantes a great European art took shape that is nothing other than the investigation of this forgotten being" (Kundera, *Art* 4-5). The recuperation of "forgotten being," the presence that Morrison called the ancestor, is the current poietic task of the novel. Further, in saying this,

Kundera reiterates the novel's concern with ontology and value in discovering and investigating life's most vexing predicaments--what Faulkner had said decades earlier when he stated his purpose in writing as recording "the heart in conflict with itself." The novel is not merely a "slice of life" but a reflection on collected assumptions and received ideas, and it possesses the ability when in the hands of the the best novelists to generate a response to a cultural crisis. The novel described as a "repository of being," therefore, focuses its creative capacities: the encounter with "otherness" is not primarily political, historical, or epistemological, (though it does involve all of these categories) but ontological. Kundera continues:

As God slowly departed from the seat whence he had directed the universe and its order of values, distinguished good from evil, and endowed each thing with meaning, Don Quixote set forth from his house into a world he could no longer recognize. In the absence of the Supreme Judge, the world suddenly appeared in its fearsome ambiguity; the single divine Truth decomposed into myriad relative truths parceled out by men. Thus was born the world of the Modern Era, and with it the novel, the image and model of that world. (Kundera, *Art* 6)

The legacy of Cervantes is the inheritance of uncertainty and unease, of indeterminacy and relativity: "the heart in conflict with itself" taken not only as the heart of the individual, but the heart of history. With the disappearance of God, humanity is left with the novel, a map for the *terra incognita* of historical life. Hence, Kundera elaborates, "The novel's spirit is the spirit of complexity. Every novel says to the reader, 'Things are not as simple as you think.'

That is the novel's eternal truth" (Kundera, *Art* 18). As Paul Coates has observed, "The novel arises when people have become so complex, fragmented and contradictory that they have to be written down to be remembered" (Coates 22). The novel is a witness to the "myriad relative truths parcelled out by men" and to the second thoughts about historical certitude.

The inheritors of these "second thoughts" for Kundera include, in the European tradition, Diderot, Musil, Hasek, Broch, and Kafka. But others whom Kundera does not mention could also be seen as inscribers of this other "counter-tradition" of the novel: Sterne, von Kleist, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Melville, Faulkner, Morrison, and Allende. Collectively these novelists see reality not just as something to be recorded, but as something to be changed. In these novels, reportage becomes fabulation; rationality is transformed into fantasy; history is expanded into myth; the inner world of the psyche gives way to the outer world of the cosmos; political realities, countering power and oppression, find apocalyptic escape in imagination and hope.

A common concern of much contemporary writing is a new affirmative mode of being that the novel sets forth. This affirmation confronts what Kundera calls the "monster of history," a force that is "impersonal, uncontrollable, incalculable, incomprehensible" (Kundera, *Art* 11). Novelists engage the many monsters of history but are not vanquished by

them. Many contemporary novelists avoid the pessimism and despair that was so dominant in literature at the beginning of the twentieth century, and which can be seen in the works of Celine, Beckett, Sartre, Maugham, and Hemingway. Instead they have chosen a path illumined in hope.

That there are many different paths to hope and possibility is part of our inheritance from Quixote, the picaresque, and the serio-comic tradition. Bakhtin sees the roots of the novel in the tradition of Menippean satire--in the satires of Lucian, and the writings of Rabelais, and Boccaccio. All of his sources of the novel share a view of the world as "unfinalizable" and as essentially open-ended; and it is in a vision of hope in the human condition, finally, that defines this "gay relativity" of the world. In the American tradition, it was Faulkner who was among the first who made this shift to hope and possibility. In his Nobel Prize Address, Faulkner made a real turn in the understanding of his own work and the task of literature in general:

I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail. (Faulkner, *Essays* 120)

In this change of temper, Faulkner makes a break with history and a mode of thinking which was the dominant discourse in modernity; he is liberating expression from "the record" and the dry and dusty fact. At the same time, Faulkner is placing himself in part of the forgotten tradition of Cervantes. Kundera calls this mode the "first half-time of the novel," (Kundera, *Interview 9*) as exemplified in the novels of Cervantes and Diderot. The "second half-time" of the novel, what Lukács calls the novel of historical consciousness, is typified by Scott and Balzac. Faulkner aligns himself with the former grouping, not necessarily in its comic, self-reflexive dimension, but in its capacity to render an ever-expanding cosmos and to remind humanity of life's noble purposes. The novel is not a "mere record," but a prop to help humanity endure, a source of judgment when questions come up for decision, and, in a time of desperation, a tool of cultural survival.

The novel, then, as Faulkner sees it, is necessarily concerned with the "old verities"--"with love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice"--and with the broad spectrum of human experience; and every question, every idea, every action it uncovers it "novelizes": it makes it new. These "old verities" are the unquestionable goods, the marks of glory as they are inscribed in the chronicle of time.

In taking up the banner of the metaphysical, the novel colonizes the discipline of philosophy, a mode of thinking

which, since Descartes, has been riveted on epistemology. The novel most prominently illustrates this metaphysical and phenomenological dimension in America and Russia where, in the absence of a native philosophical tradition, the novel has been the repository of ideas.¹³ In the novel, Kundera says,

[t]here are metaphysical problems, problems of human existence, that philosophy has never known how to grasp in all their concreteness and that only the novel can seize. This said, ...novelists ...made of the novel a supreme poetic and intellectual synthesis and accorded it a preeminent place in the cultural totality. (Kundera, *Interview* 9)

The novel, in the wedding of the "poetic and intellectual," is one of the most important forms of discourse that a culture can possess. When the novel attaches itself to ontology--and to poiesis--it alters the landscape of the historical, shaping the past and giving the future a form.

The novel accomplishes this temporal transformation in two ways: it narrates a history which is recognizable to a people; but then, it brings to light a past that has been either forgotten or never known. As Kundera says, "A novel that does not discover a hitherto unknown segment of existence is immoral....The *sequence of discoveries* (not the sum of what was written) is what constitutes the history of the European novel" (Kundera, *Art* 5-6). Thus, for Kundera,

¹³This is evident in Melville's *Moby Dick* in its extensive phenomenologies (such as on the whiteness of the whale), and in Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* in the extended meditation in the fourth section of "The Bear."

it is only the poietic history which matters; it is only the novel's creative advances which constitute its collective life as a genre.

The novel, then, is both mimetic and poietic in its thrust. It renders a representable image and, at the same time, it distorts and deforms that same image. That Faulkner pivots between two modes was noted in an early essay on Faulkner by Robert Penn Warren. Faulkner, he says, writes of two worlds: one the recognizable world of the South; the other, one he creates in his imagination: "The fact is that [Faulkner] writes of two Souths: he reports one South and creates another. On one hand he is a perfectly straight realistic writer, and on the other he is a symbolist" (Warren 59). The recognizable South is the one presented through mimesis; the unrecognized South--the "defamiliarized" level--is the poietic aspect. Thus, as the novel represents history--the story of the victor, and hence the untold story also of the vanquished, the record of wounds, sufferings and victimage--it does so with a "second thought": it makes them poietic.

Taken as such, the novel continuously discovers the creative sources of life; it gives a map, it charts a path and points the way forward. It seeks amidst imperfection to make life whole; it doesn't merely record the way traveled. Even the most pessimistic novels, Ralph Ellison has noted, make a movement toward affirmation.

I believe that true novels, even when most pessimistic and bitter, arise out of an impulse to celebrate human life and therefore are ritualistic and ceremonial at their core. Thus they would preserve as they destroy, affirm as they reject. (Ellison 114)

For Ellison, the novel is always performing a delicate exercise, pivoting between representation and creation. The "ritualistic and ceremonial" aspect would seem to be the necessary rite of passage that marks the transition between these two extremes.

In its recuperation of the past, the novel appropriates the methods of the historian; the novel is capable of striking the "sparks of hope," as Walter Benjamin has said of the historian: "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 255). If it is the case, as Hayden White asserts, that the historian appropriated the novelistic imagination of realism in the nineteenth century, then in our own time, the novelist has reversed roles and seized the position of the historian. This vision of history embodied in the novel is one where humanity is capable of averting the collective gaze away from the abyss, of turning away from the brink, and of plotting a new path for itself.

As Toni Morrison has remarked, following Faulkner and Ellison: "[The novel] should be beautiful, and powerful, but it should also *work*. It should have something in it that enlightens; something in it that opens the door and points

the way" (Morrison, *Interview* 341). And Isabel Allende has written in a similiar vein:

I feel that writing is an act of hope, a sort of communion with fellow men. The writer of good will carries a lamp to illuminate the dark corners. Only that, nothing more--a tiny beam of light to show some hidden aspect of reality, to help decipher and understand it and thus to initiate, if possible, a change in the conscience of some readers. (Allende 48-49)

But the manner in which the novelist plots the way is allusive and fragmentary. If the realist novel sought unity and the "sense of an ending," the post-realist novel is fragmentary and incomplete. Its reconciliations are never easy or formulaic, and may even be disquieting from a stylistic point of view. In a sense, the novel, like the epic, seeks its ending and its fulfillment at a later time in an action that might in the present only exist as hope.

The contemporary novel accomplishes this act of hope by rising to a visionary consciousness of the possibilities in life. C.G. Jung in his essay "Psychology and Literature" has made a helpful distinction between what he calls the psychological and the visionary modes of literature. The psychological, he states,

works with materials drawn from man's conscious life--with crucial experiences, powerful emotions, suffering, passion, and the stuff of human fate in general.

Countless literary products belong to this class: all the novels dealing with love, the family milieu, crime and society.... Whatever artistic form they may take, their contents always derive from the sphere of conscious human experience--from the psychic foreground of life we might say. (Jung 89-90)

The main line of novels in the West have belonged to this "psychological" category, insofar as they have been concerned primarily with the rendition of consciousness. Opposed to this is the "visionary mode" which explores reality at a deeper and more profound level:

[In the visionary] everything is reversed. The experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is no longer familiar. It is something strange that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind, as if it had emerged from the abyss of prehuman ages, or from a superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which passes man's understanding and to which in his weakness he may easily succumb. The very enormity of the experience gives it its value and shattering impact. Sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with its strangeness, it arises from timeless depths: glamorous, daemonic, and grotesque, it bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form....On the other hand, it can be a revelation whose heights and depths are beyond our fathoming, or a vision of beauty which we can never put into words. This disturbing spectacle of some tremendous process that in every way transcends our feeling and understanding makes quite other demands upon the powers of the artist than do the experiences of the foreground of life. (Jung 90)

The experiences contained by the visionary mode are not accountable by a causal expectation; they erupt from the "hinterland of man's mind." Nor are they accountable through normal psychological life; they are rarely a part of the representation of the affective life in "realist" novels; in fact, the implicit desire of realism has been to filter out this dimension of existence, to keep the occult hidden, even though it may be fundamental in accounting for a fully human experience. Any eruption of this kind will seem when

encountered unfamiliar and estranging as it breaks the pattern and expectation of experience like an atavism. But its visionary surfacing contains an inner meaning: the necessity for disparate experiences to be absorbed into the everyday lifeworld.¹⁴

These eruptions account for the archetypal concerns of many contemporary novels. An archetypal action resides below the level of the mythical and accounts for the most deeply instinctual aspects of an individual's life. Contrasted with this is another kind of eruption, one from without, an intrusion into history and consciousness which is unaccountable and unpredictable. Properly understood this is the apocalyptic action--a disruption, not from the past, but from the future, not from the "hinterland of man's mind," but from the fringes of history. Walter Benjamin ends his

¹⁴Mircea Eliade recounts the story of a pious rabbi who, after searching for a treasure in a distant land, discovers the treasure in his own house. Eliade remarks, quoting Heinrich Zimmer, "[T]he real treasure, that which can put an end to our poverty and all our trials, is never very far; there is no need to seek it in a distant country. It lies buried in the most intimate parts of our own house; that is, of our own being. It is behind the stove, the centre of the life and warmth that rule our existence, the heart of our heart, if only we knew how to unearth it. And yet--there is this strange and persistent fact, that it is only after a pious journey in a distant region, in a new land, that the meaning of the inner voice guiding us on our search can make itself understood by us. And to this strange and persistent fact is added another: that he who reveals to us the meaning of our mysterious inward pilgrimage must himself be a stranger, of another belief and another race" (*Myths* 245). This is a parable about the poiesis of otherness: the encounter with the other, which is part of a visionary experience (in this case a dream) is the revelation of the deepest recesses of one's own domain.

"Theses on the Philosophy of History" with this particular expectation: the predilection of both catastrophe and hope: "For every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 264).¹⁵ Both of these patterns of disruption--the archetypal and the apocalyptic--have found abundant representation in the visionary element in American fiction.

Walter Benjamin in "The Task of the Translator" asserts that all literary works not only have a life, but an afterlife. If we can say that there is a natural life to a work, we might also say that there is an "unnatural" life which will tend to arise after the flurry of the originality in the work settles. Only after a certain maturation and subsidence, a "test of time" one might say, can the full life of the work be realized, and its full meaning be made manifest. A specific quality veiled but "inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability" (*Illuminations* 71). The act of translation--assisted by the act of criticism--is a transmutation of meaning through a reconfiguration of language, and not a mere transliteration, or "re-representation" of the textual. Translation involves a "poieticism," therefore, and not a mere "mimeticism" of the original work. For Benjamin, a true translation carries over

¹⁵For an examination of the apocalyptic element in Benjamin's attitude towards history see Iseult Honohan, "Arendt and Benjamin on the Promise of History: A Network of Possibilities or One Apocalyptic Moment?"

what is most vital in the original and, in a sense re-sees it, re-envisions its context and meaning:

A translation issues from the original--not so much from its life, as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, the translation marks the stage in their continued life. (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 71)

Translation, then, is the "carrying over," the "trans-latio," of the most vital elements of the work, according to Benjamin. Part of this act of translation is the bearing of the ancestor, just as an aged Priam is borne over the shoulder of Aeneas in his act of *translatio imperii*.

One could say that the appropriate point of translation occurs when a work of art "gets over" its originality, its newness, when it begins to look old. At this time is manifested its poietic element, its positive prescriptions and not only its pathologies as narrated in its historical descriptions and cultural diagnoses. To extend the metaphor: those works that are merely pathological, that merely diagnose the disease, will die with the illness.

Thus it is only at a certain point in the critical life in any author that the critical afterlife can begin; only at this point can the real import, the real significance of the work be realized. Thus it may be asserted that now is the time for a reevaluation of the works of William Faulkner. After a lively critical life with a number of early works of criticism still considered as indispensable standards--Brooks, Vickery, Volpe--and a sustained critical activity

continuing to the present time, it is a time for reassessment of the whole of his accomplishment.¹⁶

Mikhail Bakhtin calls this movement, this path from life to afterlife, from diagnosis to prescription, a passage into "great time." A work arises in "great time" when it casts off the residues of its particular and specific relationship to time and place, and enters into the larger relationship with literary history. Bakhtin writes in his essay "Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff":

Great literary works are prepared for by centuries, and in the epoch of their creation it is merely a matter of picking the fruit that is ripe after a lengthy and complex process of maturation. Trying to understand and explain a work solely in terms of the conditions of its epoch alone, solely in terms of the conditions of the most immediate time, will never enable us to penetrate its semantic depths. Enclosure within the epoch also makes it impossible to understand the work's future life in subsequent centuries; this life appears as a kind of paradox. Works break through the boundaries of their own time, they live in centuries, that is, *great time* and frequently (with great works always) their lives there are more intense and fuller than are their lives within their own time. (Bakhtin, *Speech 4*)

One of the ways in which works become liberated is the critical and creative activity of subsequent epochs. Thus, literary history is not linear but dialogical. Bakhtin elaborates further in his "Methodology for the Human Sciences":

¹⁶For a survey of the most recent criticism and a summary of the most recent trends, see the Introduction to John E. Bassett, ed. *Faulkner in the Eighties: an annotated critical bibliography*. 1-20.

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)--they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense boundless masses of forgotten textual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in a renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival.
(Bakhtin, *Speech* 170)

Of course, saying this is not completely different from what T.S. Eliot said in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" regarding the way in which new works alter our view of the past. But Bakhtin expands upon this notion and casts his concept of great time not merely in terms in placement and displacement, but with greater urgency in terms of captivity and liberation. For Bakhtin, "The author is a captive of his epoch, of his own present. Subsequent times liberate him from this captivity, and literary scholarship is called upon to assist in this liberation" (Bakhtin, *Speech* 5).

This work of resurrection is analogous to what Jorge Luis Borges discovers in his essay "Kafka and his Precursors." Borges seeks out resemblances of Kafka in writers who came before him. In works as diverse as Zeno and his paradox, an apologue of Han Yu, Kierkegaard, and Browning, Borges detects similarities to Kafka, though, he remarks, these works do not resemble each other. It is significant to note, Borges says, that "if Kafka had never written a line, we would not perceive that quality; in other

words, it would not exist" ("Kafka" 201). Borges continues to elaborate that "every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our concept of the past as it will modify the future" (201). This insight of Borges into the understanding of the place of Kafka in literary history is significant but not merely in Kafka's particular case; it shows how works in the present "poieticize" (and defamiliarize) the stuff of the past. Borges makes us see that Kafka's predecessors cross historical and geographical boundaries; they are limited neither to modern nor Eastern-European influences. By contextualizing works in such a fashion, we glean greater understanding, not only into Kafka, but even more significantly, into his "precursors."

Taken in a larger context, this can be seen as a basic paradigm for canonical revision. Not only literature, such as the works of Kafka, but also works of criticism can perform acts of liberation for works that have preceded it. In extracting works from their known historical, thematic, and generic contexts, one is able to see them new and fresh--remade, reconstituted and reunderstood on different critical terrain.

The convergence of the natural afterlife of Faulkner with the contemporary flurry of activity in the novel bestows urgency on the task of new critical approaches to the Faulkner canon. In this act that criticism perennially performs on its object, the present works over the past with redemptive power. As Walter Benjamin notes:

The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 254)

This claim cannot be "settled cheaply," Benjamin observes, for we owe a debt that we did not approve, to a creditor who calls up the debt on terms and at a time not of our choosing. This debt is the image of the past, the cultural memory in its poietic aspect. Benjamin continues,

The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and never seen again....For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably. (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 255)

Thus the act of criticism releases the creative potential in the past, where, in each epoch, similar events are understood in a different way. This paradox of recognition and non-recognition of the image goes to the heart of the poietic apprehension of history. The past must be recognized as the past, but then it must also be recognized as a contemporary concern. Bakhtin's jest contains its subtle truth: "[T]he ancient Greeks did not know the main thing about themselves, that they were ancient Greeks" (Bakhtin, *Speech* 6).

Rendering something ancient is synonymous with consigning it to irrelevance. The novel works against irrelevance by ensuring that the dead are "novelized," that they too are part of the renewal of the world.

The face of the past greets the present in the way that the face of a stranger confronts a reluctant host; the stranger is recognized as such only when removed from a familiar context. This is to say that the face of the past must be "defamiliarized" in order to be poietic. The Russian Formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky states,

And so, in order to return sensation to our limbs, in order to make us feel objects, to make a stone feel stony, man has been given the tool of art. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By "enstranging" objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and "laborious." The perceptual process of art has a process all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. *Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant.*

The life of a poem (and of an artifact) proceeds from vision to recognition, from poetry to prose, from the concrete to the general. (Shklovsky 6)

Shklovsky sees the purpose of art as defamiliarization--purposely estranging (or "enstranging") objects so that they can be seen--envisioned--as something new rather than merely as something old; the image must be seen as something poietic and not just mimetic. As the mimetic element in a work illuminates a recognizable face (as in Faulkner's depiction of the South), the poietic discovers the face that is not immediately recognizable, the ancestral presence, the unspoken story, and brings it into visibility through a type of defamiliarization. If this, as Shklovsky emphasizes, is the purpose of art, it is even more so the particular calling of the novel in America. The novel has been the site for

America's self-discovery and self-recognition throughout its history, and it continues at the present time to set and expand the boundaries of representation as it puts forward a redefinition of the American myth.

II. The Novel and Romance in America: Toward a New Myth

Between the novel and America there are peculiar and intimate connections. A new literary form and a new society, their beginnings coincide with the beginnings of the modern era and, indeed, help to define it. We are living, not only in the Age of America but also in the Age of the Novel, at the moment when the literature of a country without a first rate verse epic or a memorable verse tragedy has become the model of half the world. (Fiedler, *Love and Death* 23)

There is an unthinkable gulf between us and America, and across the space we see, not our own folk signalling to us, but strangers, incomprehensible beings, simulacra perhaps of ourselves, but other, creatures of an other-world....The present reality is a reality of untranslatable otherness, parallel which lay between St. Augustine and an Orthodox senator in Rome of the same day. The oneness is historic only. (Lawrence, "Spirit" 16-17)

The nation, Benedict Anderson observes, is an "imagined community," a network of shared assumptions, a complex variety of kinships, "a deep horizontal comradeship" (7), whose definition is as much related to questions of myth, anthropology and religion as it is to liberalism, fascism and the rise of ideology. Anderson's analysis aligns questions of America's self-definition to the history of the novel in the New World, and particularly the varieties of the genre that have had an uneasy relationship with the mimetic tradition.

The American canon has been dominated by a friendly rivalry between the mimetic and poietic forms as they have been distilled in the strains of the novel and romance.

Hawthorne was one of the first to make the distinction between romance and novel in his well-known Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*:

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former--while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart--has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he thinks fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and, especially the Marvellous as a slight, delicate, evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the Public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime, even if he disregard this caution. (Hawthorne 1)

Hawthorne, and Henry James after him, gives impetus to this opposition between novel and romance which remains an active site of contention to the present time.¹

¹For a discussion of the controversy between these two contending views of the novel, see Elisa Greenwald's helpful discussion in the chapter "Romance and Novel" in her *Realism and Romance: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and American Fiction*. See also, Chapter One, "Loomings" in Michael Davitt Bell, *The Development of American Romance: The Sacrifice of Relation*. Amy Kaplan, in *The Social Construction of American Realism*, argues against reading American literature in the Romance tradition. See also Joseph Kronick's "Romance and the Prose of the World: Hegelian Reflections on Hawthorne and America" in *Theorizing American Literature: Hegel, the Sign, and History*. Bainard Cowan and Joseph Kronick, eds. For Kronick, the Romance tradition as the exemplary American

Flannery O'Connor sees Hawthorne's invocation of the romance as an attempt to absorb poetic elements into the novel. In her essay "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction," she comments:

The Southern writer is forced from all sides to make his gaze extend beyond the surface, beyond mere problems, until it touches that realm which is the concern of prophets and poets. When Hawthorne said he wrote romances, he was attempting, in effect, to keep for fiction some of its freedom from social determinisms and to steer it in the direction of poetry. (45-46)

The novel (or, more accurately, romance), as it has developed since Hawthorne, has continued to align itself more closely with poetry and with its mine of literary tropes.

The novel, then, as we have come to know it as an entirely new phenomenon, loaded with the imperative of historical realism, seems to have a peculiarly English provenance. Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* traces the development of the genre in England with the allied associations of the growth of literacy, the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie, and the onset of individualism. But the genealogy of the romance reaches farther back in time, and so perhaps it is fair to speculate that in this aspect of the canon which will survive the death of these particular cultural phenomena. As the novel was born with modernity so will it die with it, many would contend.

genre calls attention to its own mode of representation and mirrors the idea of America as a self-created nation.

Having evolved as the standard critical criterion in the novel, realism has been characterized by and large as a point of style. Socialist Realism, Magical Realism, Naturalism, are all primarily judged in their ability to represent nature faithfully by means of stylistic motifs. But this designation focuses on only one aspect: these are less narrative techniques than attitudes toward the representation of history, or, more broadly, attitudes towards the past manifested in the present through memory, and inclinations toward the future born in desire.

While the romance tradition does not render history as event, it produces patterns on the events, and contends with the facts of history through its symbolic, rather than literal, method of representation. In so doing, it overcomes some of the problems of historiography: most notably, point of view. Both realism and history have point of view, and as Walter Benjamin in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," has explained, that point of view lies most often with the victor. While this monological perspective may be subverted in the best realist novels, the romance tradition often takes multiple points of view, and can, through a dialogical structure, assume a less prejudicial and exclusive interpretation of the past.

As the question of history ascends to a level of metahistory, it is appropriate, and perhaps inevitable, to invoke the thorny subject of myth. Richard Slotkin in his

most recent work, *Gunfighter Nation*, aptly defines the relationship of myth to history:

Myth expresses ideology in a narrative, rather than a discursive or argumentative structure. Its language is metaphorical and suggestive rather than logical and analytical. The movement of a mythic narrative, like that of any story, implies a theory of cause-and-effect and therefore a theory of history (or even of cosmology); but these ideas are offered in a form that disarms critical analysis by its appeal to the structures and traditions of story-telling and the clichés of historical memory. Although myths are the product of human thought and labor, their identification with venerable tradition makes them appear to be products of "nature" rather than history--expressions of a trans-historical consciousness or some other form of "natural law." (6)

A mythic presentation is, then, according to Slotkin, historical, but it differs from a purely analytic examination of the past in its appeal to an understanding of the world grounded in symbolic structures.² It is not just the realist novel, then, that has a monopoly on historical representation; novels drawing on the Romantic-Fantastic and Biblical strains similarly represent, in their fashion, a point of view on history.³ Faulkner himself observed this

²One of the earliest American novelists, Charles Brockden Brown, attributes to romance what Slotkin attributes to myth. In the 1800 issue of the *Monthly Magazine and American Review*, Brown observes, "The observer or experimentalist, therefore, who carefully watches, and faithfully enumerates the appearances which occur, may claim the appellation of historian. He who adorns these appearances with cause and effect, and traces resemblances between the past, distant, and future with the present, performs a different part. He is a dealer, not in certainties, but in probabilities, and is therefore a romancer" (251).

³Edouard Glissant in *Caribbean Discourse* has made a similar observation concerning historical representation and novelistic techniques: "In the case of History, after the methodological beginnings of the eighteenth century, which

poietic aspect of the novel when, in one of his University of Virginia lectures, he reappropriated Wallace Stevens and observed that literature itself was the fourteenth way of looking at a blackbird. After historians have exhausted in their own narratives the refractions of the past, literature takes its own aspect on the object.

Mimetic realism allies the novel with dominant discourses and prevailing metaphors and can, unless subverted, become unwitting tools in domination and oppression. Mythic discourse as embodied in the romance tradition runs counter to dominant political currents and asserts its own discourse as authoritative. While it may appropriate the dominant discourse, it will do so only for its own purposes, cannibalizing for parts various narrative forms--chronicles, testaments, historiography, legal documents, scientific treatises--for its own poietic purposes.

are surely achievements in scientific thought as well, a tremendous belief will begin to grow in the objectivity of the historian. In the case of Literature, a no less great bias, at the same time, will unleash the ravages of "imitation," and it is the belief in the powers of realism, which, for instance, the blind imitators of Balzac will struggle in vain to apply. The surface effects of literary realism are the precise equivalent of the historian's claim to pure objectivity. And at the same time the ambiguities emerge. To the pair realism-objectivity one could legitimately oppose another pair: romanticism-subjectivity. As opposed to the claim of describing *the whole of the real*, one might prefer the attempt to completely reconstruct (or to recreate) in depth one part of this reality" (73-74). Glissant seems to see the exclusionary aspects "in the surface effects of literary realism," a bias which the alternate strains in the novel would seek to offset.

Realism, in part of its reception at least, seems closely tied in the nineteenth century to history as surveillance: the moral and political center keeps close watch on the peripheral multitudes. But realism is also tied to a particular conception of the real that is based on the agreed-upon facts of the case. This representation of the facts may be thought of in two ways: in the first place, on consensus or number rather than imagination; and, secondly, on the dominant discourse, rather than on marginal and excluded discourses. As George J. Becker states in defining realism:

[Realism] aims at nothing less than the faithful and complete rendition of reality, and, for the most part weak in metaphysics, it has usually fallen back on a kind of Benthamite doctrine that the most real is that which is experienced by the greatest number. At the very beginning of the movement Champfleury stated: "I understand by realism the bringing of the greatest sum of reality into the narration of events, into the adventures of the personages, into their language....I want the novel, a work of fiction, to appear as true as a court record." (Becker 185)

The real as that experienced by the greatest number ties realism with a particular "crowd": namely the nation-state whose history in modernity was manifested in mass movements. Realism, as representing the dominant view of history, at least in terms of what Georg Lukács terms the "Historical Novel," is judged by the author through the lens of national character. But this representation is not done independently of the dominant discourses which flourish alongside national definition. As Champfleury's exhortation pointedly

illustrates, the novel should "appear as true as a court record." In order to render the "real" as "true" (or, more accurately, socially accepted) therefore, the realistic novelist has had to render the real in light of the dominant discourse of the period.

Ian Watt makes a parallel observation in his definition of realism: "The novel's mode of imitating reality may therefore be equally well summarized in terms of the procedures of...a group of specialists in epistemology, the jury in a court of law. Their expectations, and those of the novel reader coincide in many ways" (31). A history of the realist novel reveals a persistent dialogue with the dominant discourse of the epoch, whether it be legal, as in this case, or scientific, or, as González Echevarría contends is the case in the Latin American novel, anthropological.⁴

Clearly modern novelists, whatever their stripe, have had in some way to make their pact with realism. The current enterprise of canonical revision, then, on one level, ought to seek inclusion of those novelists who made the pact with

⁴This will be discussed at greater length later in light of Roberto González Echevarría's thesis in his *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. González Echevarría states, "It is my hypothesis that the novel, having no fixed form of its own, often assumes that of a given kind of document endowed with truth-bearing power by society at given moments of time. The novel, or what is called the novel at various points in history, mimics such documents to show their conventionality, their subjection to strategies of textual engenderment similar to those governing literature, which in turn reflect those of language itself" (8). Of course, one can readily see how the realist novel leaves itself open to this type of deconstruction.

realism most tenuously. Any novelist who reaches too secure an agreement with the dominant discourse of the period will perish along with the demise of that discourse. As representative novels of this type I would include the major figures of American Naturalism: Dreiser, Norris, Crane, Hemingway, and Steinbeck. But the work of the imagination, and the novel in particular, whose language speaks beyond prevailing opinion and received ideas, surfaces to reveal something of the true field of human relations. As Claudio Magris states, literature shows us "the true face of history, the essence of which is continuously betrayed and negated by politics--and its realization is still pending" (21). The project of redefining American literature ought, therefore, to uncover those writers who cast their net most broadly over human experience and whose observations rose to a meta-level. In the Americas this would include Melville, Hawthorne, Faulkner, Borges, Morrison, García Márquez, and Allende. Similarly, those who adhered to the realist canon and concomitantly responded, by analysis, critique, or prescription, to the assumptions which it unconsciously set forth warrant inclusion. Writers such as Twain, Harriet Jacobs, O'Connor, Caroline Gordon, Carpentier, and Vargas Llosa might be included in this demarcation. Both of these strains are manifested in various ways in the romance tradition of the novel in America, and the "other side" of European novelistic discourse represented by Cervantes,

Sterne, Hoffmann, von Kleist, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Broch, and Calvino.

One of the dominant metaphors of American self-definition has been the myth of the frontier. Since Frederick Jackson Turner set forth his frontier thesis, criticism has increasingly recognized that American literature has always tended to articulate the encounter with the new and unfamiliar.⁵ Yet the full implications of this encounter, particularly in the American novel, have been only partially realized. Not only is it the contact with the social "other"--the marginalized and the excluded, the eccentric and the unfamiliar--but it is the contact with the numinous "other" in the context of Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*. In this "other" dimension resides the wellspring of a people's destiny, and it has been the continuous struggle and ongoing aspiration of American literature to uncover this hidden, and even suppressed reality.

Yet there are further complications to the conventional definition of the frontier: the received idea is predicated on the notion that it is the contact with the frontier itself, or the frontier as limit, that is determinant, and

⁵A number of works see the frontier encounter as central to an understanding of American literature: Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence* and *The Fatal Environment*; Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land*, Edwin Fussell, *Frontier: American Literature and the American West*, Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* and *The Return of the Vanishing American*.

not what the contact might initiate and stimulate on the other side. The underlying assumption about the frontier, therefore, is that there is nothing tangible on the other side--there is "no there there." It is characterized by the "infinite," the "unknown," "freedom" and "boundlessness." As Mark Busby, David Mogen, and Paul Bryant state in their study of the American frontier:

[The concept of the frontier] begins with a sense of wonder at the infinite possibilities in the expanding world of the Renaissance explorers, for the frontier as the margin of the known opened the possibility of wonders in the unknown. The frontier as the limit of the settled and developed offered the possibility of new land, new resources, seemingly inexhaustible, yet to be gained. The frontier as the limit of existing society demarcated the line beyond which beckoned freedom from existing social and political restraints. In effect, the frontier was the gateway through which one might escape from time into space, from the bounds to boundlessness, and from the works of corrupt and corrupting humanity to the works of God in uncorrupted nature. (Mogen 5-6)

But now this central American trope is undergoing a reevaluation; the frontier is not only the demarcation of a boundary which separates the civilized and the barbarous, or a place where one can be "free," as if there were no preexisting order--even an order of nature--beyond the boundaries of the familiar. On the contrary, the confrontation with the frontier is the perennial encounter with the "always already"--with presence. In American literature this is recorded in the encounter with the "ancestral presences," the forest "gigantic and brooding," the "dark backward abyss of time," Jobaker and Sam Fathers in

Go Down, Moses, and Queequeg in *Moby Dick*. The frontier is not the beginning of yet another process of mimesis, but the first step in any productive poietic relation.

Richard Morse in *New World Soundings* notes the differences in the social mentality toward the frontier in the American context. Latin America, he asserts, through the influence of Suarez and the natural law tradition, gave value --at least in the abstract--to indigenous peoples. The Lockean influence in America (which he see as dominant), rooted in private property rights, discounts the wilderness as an empty quarter, a place where civilization can be replicated, duplicated, and imitated without hindrance, where one is given a space to enact, as it were, an imperial act of cultural mimesis. Morse locates the difference in attitude in the divergent religious traditions in Latin and North America. He sums up his observations: "Protestant civilization can develop energies endlessly in a wilderness, as did the United States. Catholic civilization stagnates when not in vital contact with the diverse tribes and cultures of mankind" (130). It is no coincidence, then, that current activity in the novel is burgeoning in cultures which have "catholic" cultural residues--particularly in Latin America and Eastern Europe. The terrain of the American novel, then, as it is emerging in a multicultural context, is inherently poietic in that the poietic act consistently engages the other side; it persistently tests the creative capacities of "otherness" in all its manifestations.

It is this notion of "otherness" which marks the frontier experience and which forges the genealogical link between the American Novel/Romance as we have known it, with its present extensions in Latin-American, African-American and other New World literatures.

This creative encounter with otherness is defined, at the present time, in the "magical realization" of the American canon. Wayne Ude in his essay "North American Magical Realism" explores affinities among Magical Realist novels in the Americas. He enumerates a collection of novels and novelists which he sees as crossing the American Literature/Magical Realist divide: Borges, Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, García Márquez, Frank Waters's *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*, Rudolpho Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*, Toni Morrison's *Sula*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Tar Baby*, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* and Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. Among these novels he finds six common elements:

- (1) They reject the narrow confines of traditional realism for a multi-dimensional, metaphysical reality;
- (2) They depict the mythical or legendary --as well as the historical--past as an acute presence in contemporary life;
- (3) They reveal an acute sense of esthetics, achieving--or at least seeking--poetic re-creations rather than mere imitations of reality (though we've often not given such 19th-century writers as Hawthorne and Melville credit for their esthetic sensibilities, preferring instead to measure their romance-novels against Henry James' standards for the realist novel);
- (4) They distort time, space and identity as those elements are understood in conventional realism, seeking for some new--or perhaps old--

understanding; (5) Their versions of human psychology tend to be based on Jungian archetypal theories rather than on Skinnerian behaviorism or Freudian/surrealist notions of the single, isolated, agonizing psyche; (6) They demonstrate a firm belief in the validity of the realities they present; their persuasive matter-of-fact tones and use of the everyday details of commonplace realism, mixed with magical--or mystical--elements are designed to produce in the reader an equally firm belief. (Ude 23)

The American novel, then, in the Magical Realist/Romantic tradition, aims at a different rendering of reality from that of the conventional European novel. But even the tradition of the romance only begins to approach the range of experience that New World literatures currently evidence.

At its core, the New World outlook upsets the serenely objective and dispassionate view of the world at which the modern impressionistic novel aimed; it is variously demanding, insistent, urgent; it is rarely calm, noncommittal, or complacent. Flaubert writes in a letter of August, 1853:

Really great works have a serene look. Through small openings one perceives precipices; down at the bottom there is darkness, vertigo; but above the whole soars something singularly sweet. That is the ideal of light, the smiling of the sun; and how calm it is, calm and strong!...The highest and hardest thing is it seems to me to create a state of reverie. (Quoted in Kaufmann 272)

The American canon stands in stark contrast to this Olympian serenity. Full of shocks and traumas, the American novel breaks the cool reveries and poise of the world. But it not only discovers and glimpses from afar the fissures in the world and the psyche; the American novel makes it its mission to explore them.

The American imagination in its visionary capacity patterns a Biblical typology over its history. America has been variously seen as an encounter with the distant past--the "primitive" or the garden state; or the distant future--the unseen but envisionable future--embodied in the New Jerusalem.

The mythology of this transformation of the American eschatological sense of time has had significant critical comment,⁶ but this Biblical narrative is not the petrified and conservative narrative that many would think; instead it offers a new and radical break with the existing social reality. As Walter Brueggemann in *The Prophetic Imagination* observes concerning the call of Moses: "Most of us are probably so used to these narratives that we have become insensitive to the radical and revolutionary social reality that emerged because of Moses" (15). Moreover, Brueggemann continues, the history of Israel marks a departure from the structures of domination and oppression:

The radical break of Moses and Israel from imperial reality is a two-dimensioned break from both the religion of static triumphalism and the politics of oppression and exploitation. Moses dismantled the religion of static triumphalism by

⁶See R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*; Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*; Lewis Mumford, "Introduction," *The Golden Day: A Study in American Literature and Culture*; Lewis P. Simpson, *The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature*; Perry Miller, *Errand in the Wilderness*; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*.

exposing the Gods and showing that in fact they had no power and were not gods. (Brueggemann 16)

The biblical (or more specifically, the prophetic) awakens an alternate consciousness and perception regarding the dominant culture and accepted history.

The encounter with the New World as it is articulated in the novel, is, then, a break from European history; but this break is not merely an escape from history, or an "escape into myth" as it is sometimes derisively phrased. Such a rupture, what Walter Benjamin has termed "allegory," allows for the entry of intervening elements from above and below, confusing and complicating the smooth field of history, transforming it into that "pile of debris," to repeat Benjamin, or the "detritus of time" to quote Faulkner.

The American novel through its ruptures of linear structures seeks to make all time present; past and future are seen under the aspect of "simultaneity." It is part of the novel's atavistic quality to allow unpredictable interventions of the past into the present, and similarly to hope for a resurfacing of the present in the future.

An accumulated past includes at once a hidden and profound strain that struggles for life, and another past, another history, which stubbornly seeks domination. These "fragments" or "ruins" (to continue evoking Benjaminian terms) of the past remain as a part of history. Things seemingly lost still remain stored in some abode of permanence. As Sethe says in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: "If a house burns down, its gone, but the place--the picture of it

--stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there in the world" (44). Or as Morrison evokes further in her "spores of bluefern" passage:

Spores of bluefern growing in the hollows along the riverbank float toward the water in silver-blue lines hard to see unless you are in or near them, lying right at the river's edge when the sunshots are low and drained. Often they are mistook for insects--but they are seeds in which the whole generation sleeps confident of a future. And for a moment it is easy to believe each one has one--will become all of what is contained in the spore: will live out its days as planned. This moment of certainty lasts no longer than that; longer perhaps than the spore itself. (*Beloved* 103-104)

In the spores of bluefern are seeds planted in the past for the future, some of which will die, and some that will live. These spores might take the form of past wounds seeking redress, repressed desires, or forgotten memories. It is the task of the novel to sort through the spores, to set forth what memories ought to have an afterlife, and what must, perhaps, truly die, so that new memory, a new myth, can be formed, a different story told, and a collective life imagined.

The comprehensive form of the Bible imparts a "shaggy tremendous shape" (*Go Down, Moses* 193)⁷ to American literature. In this characteristic, American novels share an

⁷All quotations from *Go Down, Moses* are taken from the Vintage Books Edition (1973), and all subsequent references to the text will be abbreviated as *GDM* except in cases where the source is obvious from the context.

affinity with their Russian cousins.⁸ This similarity was remarked by D.H. Lawrence in his *Studies in Classic American Literature*. In his Foreword he states:

Two bodies of modern literature seem to have come to a real verge: the Russian and the American.... The great difference between the extreme Russians and the extreme Americans lies in the fact that the Russians are explicit and hate eloquence and symbols, seeing in these only subterfuge, whereas the Americans refuse everything explicit and always put up a sort of double meaning. They revel in subterfuge. They prefer their truth safely swaddled in an ark of bulrushes, and deposited among the reeds until some friendly Egyptian princess comes to rescue the babe. (Lawrence *Studies* 4)

Whether consciously or not, Lawrence hits upon the crux of the matter in the American novel: the discovery of its truth, so carefully hidden, is the unveiling of Moses--and the biblical element--in its form. But this element has consistently escaped critical attention, embedded in the deep structure, the "subterfuge" in American fiction.

Lawrence elaborates further on this distinctive element in American literature: "The old American Art-Speech contains an alien quality, which belongs to the American continent and

⁸Michael Holquist and Walter Reed make a similar point in their essay "Six Theses on the Novel--and Some Metaphors": "With the development of nineteenth-century Russian literature on the one hand and nineteenth-century American literature on the other as independent projections of the European literary system, the novel achieves a vast new field of possibilities. Russia and America represent the novelization of European culture as a whole, although again, as far as the novel itself is concerned, the new contours of prose fiction are only one element in a complex of cultural changes" (421). This convergence anticipates the affinities between Russian critical tropes, such as Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism and Viktor Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization, with the American canon.

nowhere else" (Lawrence, *Studies* 7). American literature dwells in its own "imaginary landscape," in William Irwin Thompson's phrase. Lawrence continues to compare the foreign strands in the American canon to the dissonant and unrecognized voices in late Roman antiquity:

One wonders what the proper high-brow Romans of the third and fourth centuries read into the strange utterances of Lucretius or Apulieus or Tertullian, Augustine or Athanasius. The uncanny voices of Iberian Spain, the weirdness of Old Carthage, the passion of Libya and North Africa; you may bet the proper old Romans never heard them at all. They read Old Latin inference over the top of it, as we read old European inference over the top of Poe or Hawthorne. (Lawrence, *Studies* 7)

This weird and uncanny voice--and to take Lawrence literally, the African voice--in American literature is not merely a peripheral concern, but, for Lawrence, a quality lying at the heart of what we know as American literature. It could be thought of as an American Orientalism, to appropriate the terminology of Edward Said. This Orientalism has been a pervasive but unacknowledged cultural context present at the subterranean stratum of cultural life, while on the political level, America has continued to be dominated by European cultural forms. In the American literary canon, the realism of the English novel tradition has taken on the aura of the classicism of a "high-brow Roman." But this literary distinction evidences not so much a critical exclusion as a literary deafness and a rhetorical blindness. The long-standing critical dependence on mainstream English models in interpreting American literature has overlooked this

mysterious alternate lineage, this hierophantic voice in literary demography.

Richard Chase in *The American Novel and its Tradition* (1957) concurs with and elaborates on Lawrence's view. In comparing English and American novels, he states that the English novel has had a kind of "imperial enterprise" in literary history in contrast to the American novel, which "has been content to explore, rather than to appropriate and civilize, the remarkable and in some ways unexampled territories of life in the New World and to reflect its anomalies and dilemmas" (5).

Chase continues to distinguish these two manifestations of the novel, the American and the English, and finds the "American novel...more profound and clairvoyant than the English novel, but by the same token it is narrower and more arbitrary and it tends to carve out of experience brilliant, highly wrought fragments rather than massive unities" (5). Chase accurately suggests the visionary--and fragmentary--quality of American literature in opposition to the rather monumental English and French traditions, or what in common terms has become known as the "well-made novel." Further, Chase's suggestion of the visionary nature of American literature recalls Jung's distinction between literature which dwells on the surface of consciousness and that which brings to light that strange netherworld of human thought and emotion.

This revisionary enterprise which Lawrence began and Chase updated, albeit in a more conservative fashion, has most recently been supplemented by Vera Kutzinski in her exploration of New World models for American literature. In *Against the American Grain* Kutzinski seeks to reassess critical and literary categories and conventions as they apply to the Americas. Kutzinski concentrates on the difference, not between English and American literature, but between American and New World literature. In this exercise of canonical revision, she seeks to expand the canon to include works previously excluded by interpretive models. Kutzinski sees American literature as having labored under an interpretive monolith which a turn toward New World models seeks to remedy. Kutzinski explains:

American literature as a critical category presumes a common ground for all the different groups, styles, and trends that compose the New World literary scene and thus projects onto that vast and diversified body of literature a cultural homogeneity that is but another manifestation of the consensus ideology. (13)

The interpretive hegemony of European realism and its critical aftermath has contributed to the perception of a false homogeneity within the American canon and has overlooked or excluded consideration of alternate imaginative models. Although the approach to myth and culture in this study differs considerably from Kutzinski's, it does share the common goal of the conversion of an older conception of American literature to a broader category of "New World" literature.

Richard Slotkin in *Gunfighter Nation* advocates a reexamination of the meaning of the American myth--a myth not as a mimetic appropriation of prior myths, but as a new patterning suited for the demands of the present. Any mythopoesis, Slotkin would suggest, must give the proper deference to memory; in the creative re-telling of the story of culture one must not only choose what memories will dominate, but what memories can be brought to light given an already received history. Slotkin addresses this in his discussion of the need of a new American myth, a myth which overcomes the shortcomings of the older frontier model:

If a new mythology is to fulfill its cultural function, it will have to recognize and incorporate a new set of memories that more accurately reflect American society, culture, and politics in the last forty years....Even in its liberal form, the traditional Myth of the Frontier was exclusionist in its premises, idealizing the White male adventurer as the hero of national history....Historical memory will have to be revised, not to invent an imaginary role for supposedly marginal minorities, but to register the fact that our history in the West and in the East, was shaped from the beginning by the meeting, conversation, and mutual adaptations of different cultures. (655)

While the political level may have forgotten the fact of a history built on the "meeting, conversation, mutual adaptation" of different cultures, the literary tradition generally, and the novel in particular, has always, in its best forms, uncovered this relation. And further Slotkin adds:

The myth/ideology of a living culture is not a determinate program that endlessly and helplessly reproduces itself but a volatile and ongoing

conversation in which the basic value-conflicts, ambivalent desires, and contradictory intentions of the culture's constituents are continuously entertained....

Myth is not something *given*, but something *made*, a product of human labor, one of the tools by which human beings do the work of making culture and society. The discourses of myth are, and have been, medium as well as message: instruments of linguistic and ideological creativity as well as a constraining grammar of memories and beliefs. We can use that instrument to reify our nostalgia for a falsely idealized past--to imagine the nation as a monstrously overgrown Disneyworld or Sturbridge Village--or we can make mythic discourse one of the many ways we have of imagining and speaking truth. (659-660)

Myth is conservative in that it provides a "constraining grammar," it acknowledges the limitations in preexistent cultural metaphors; myth must pay its debt to mimesis as it embraces poesis. Mythopoesis, then, is an action that must be performed in cooperation with all the gods--including Clio, the muse of history--and all of the resources that a particular people have been given if there is to be any hope for the proposition that there can be a culture in which all can creatively share. As Louise Cowan has noted, myth produces "a network of symbols, a web wherein insights are captured, a matrix where intuition can dwell; from it...extends a kind of lightning rod to attract the divine afflatus" (*Introduction* 10). Myth beckons the soul of a people to realize itself in history, and it is, in our own time, the novel which enunciates this mission.

Any survey of novel criticism would bear out the observation that theories of the novel operate in the prophetic mode. Philosophies of the novel are at least as

concerned about the "future of the novel" as they are about origins and development. But as Friedrich Schlegel, the great nineteenth-century theoretician of the novel, reminds us in an aphorism anticipating Walter Benjamin, "The historian is a prophet facing backwards." If history is an act of speculation directed toward the past, it is time to cast a backward glance to catch a glimpse of those forces that now survive the demise of the novel; then we might cast our vision to the fulfillment in the new novel that Faulkner, in mid-twentieth century America, was able to bring to fruition.

III. Theories of the Novel and Roman in Modernity

i. Lukács: Mimetic Irony and the Tragedy of History

When, in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Thomas Sutpen arrives at Frenchman's Bend to set up Sutpen's Hundred, the fulfillment of his dynastic desires, he is performing an act of imitation that has been long prepared for in the history of the novel.

The French architect, an "alertly resigned man with a grim, harried Latin face, in a frock coat and a flowered waistcoat and a hat which would have created no furore on a Paris boulevard," armed for his commission with "somerly theatric clothing and the expression of fatalistic and amazed determination" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 35) serves as the catalyst and surrogate for Sutpen's *haute* bourgeois aspirations. Sutpen's action, repeated in manifold ways throughout the new world, itself imitates the idealized model of the bourgeois life. One would be inclined to think that Sutpen, like Emma Bovary, read too much Walter Scott in his youth.

Whether manifested in desire, or in colonialism, the modern novel in general, and Faulkner in particular, in characters such as Thomas Sutpen, Quentin Compson, and Flem Snopes, reveals the contagious mimeticism of modernity. René Girard was one of the first to detect this mimeticism as he exfoliated in his well-known *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, but a similar imitation of ideal models occurs on the political level, and its influence has been a significant force in the realist tradition in the American novel.

In discussing the mimetic novel outside the line of criticism concerned with style, narration, point of view, and character formation--the questions that have constituted the critical mainstays of the English tradition in what I have previously characterized as the novels of Impressionism and Reportage¹--one must inevitably be led to the substantial contribution of Georg Lukács. His ambitious and influential *Theory of the Novel* (1920) has provided a critical and philosophic basis for the novel that has influenced the dominant methods of interpretation.

Since Lukács, it has been customary to compare the novel with the genre of the epic. Not only Lukács, but Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* and Ortega y Gasset in his *Meditations on Quixote* establish epic as the standard against which the novel is measured. Lukács begins the *Theory of the Novel*, not with the novel, then, but with its ostensible epic origins:

Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the image of all possible paths--ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars. Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar, full of adventure and yet their own. (Lukács, *Theory* 29)

¹I refer to the strain of Anglo-American criticism which would include: E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*; Henry James, *The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel*; Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*; Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. For a summary of some of the various strains in novel criticism, see the opening chapters of Walter L. Reed, *An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Picaresque*.

The age of the epic is one in which "being and destiny, adventure and accomplishment, life and essence are then identical concepts" (30). The epic world is described as a harmonious whole, but one which is now lost and forever inaccessible. In a sense, Lukács's entire life's work, from this early neoclassical approach to the novel, to his later Stalinist phase, is a consequence of this notion of the epic and the subsequent unattainable pursuit for the recovery of lost essence.

But this sometime opposition, sometime conflation of the novel and epic has, more often than not, confused the two genres. Particularly in the notion of "totality"--which is where Lukács detects similarities in both genres--the neoclassical idea of the epic filters down a distorted picture of the novel: "The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality" (56). The desire for totality, of an inner harmony, and a structural beginning, middle, and end, is part of the inheritance of Aristotle's interpretation of tragedy in the *Poetics*. But contemporary novels are usually not viewed as "unities," especially in the way the term was reduced and codified through a rigorous neoclassicism. More often than not, contemporary novels--especially American novels--are fragmentary and incomplete, "unfinalizable" and "open-ended"

as Bakhtin asserts, awaiting their completion in a creative response at a later time.

This "received idea" of the epic as a harmonious whole, rooted in an interpretation of the Greeks, and particularly in a reading of Homer, traces its genealogy back to Johann Winckelmann's highly influential *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, written in 1755. For more than a century, Winckelmann's ideas had a monopoly on the European image of the classical world. From Winckelmann we inherit the classical aesthetic as a sphere of noble Beauty and Simplicity, of a unified and harmonious whole. This view, among many critics, still holds considerable currency to this day. Winckelmann begins his reflection:

Good taste, which is becoming more prevalent through-out the world, had its origins under the skies of Greece....

The taste which the works exhibited in their works of art was unique and has seldom been taken far from its source without loss. (Winckelmann 3)

Winckelmann traces true beauty to the "skies of Greece" in this opening passage of remarkable similarity to that of Lukacs; all subsequent art forms are a diminishment of and devolution from this original Golden Age. Even all the festivals, all manifestations of violence, are subsumed into the harmonious world of the beautiful. This view carried the day without critical dissent until Nietzsche's *Birth of*

Tragedy divided the Greek sensibility into the Apollonian and the Dionysian.²

Winckelmann continues his analysis to see the highest law for Greek artists as the creation of "a just resemblance and at the same time a more handsome one" (17). This Greek notion of representation--as interpreted by Winckelmann--develops into a rigid idea of mimesis in a stiff realism as it matures into actual literary representation. As James Martin remarks: "We shall see that the mimetic theory of aesthetic creation would become a major type of critical theory after aesthetics emerged as a specific form of systematic reflection" (12). Furthermore, Winckelmann reiterates,

If the Artist builds upon this groundwork and allows the Greek rules of beauty to guide his hand and mind, he will be on the path which will lead him safely to the imitation of nature. The concepts of unity and completeness in the nature of antiquity will purify and make more meaningful the concepts of those things that are divided in our nature. (Winckelmann 21)

This unified and integrated view of Greek art is easily transferred to the epic--the genre which has been generally considered, at least in the neoclassical canon, the most elevated.

²More recent analyses of the classical world, such as Martin Bernal's *Black Athena; The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Volume 1; The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985* have continued the reevaluation of the Greeks. Bernal specifically discusses the influence of Winckelmann on the eighteenth-century interpretation of the Greeks, and cites Goethe who "exuberantly called the 18th century 'the century of Winckelmann'" (214).

Throughout the *Theory of the Novel*, Lukács adheres closely to Winckelmann in his estimation of the Greeks: "[T]he secret of the Greek world...[is] its perfection, which is unthinkable for us, and the unbridgeable gulf that separates us from it" (30-31). But in the modern world, he maintains, in this age of disintegration, there cannot be a naive and simple acceptance of the transcendental world of forms; gone is the "spontaneous totality of being" (38). In fact, the disintegration of the world is a condition for the consciousness of art, according to Lukács. So now, he argues, one must carry "the fragmentary nature of the world's structure into the world of forms" (39). The epic is thus "translated" into the novel, albeit in an inferior fashion; the world is fragmented but art is whole. Lukács, while leaving behind the idealized epic naiveté and simplicity, carries forward the ideal of unity and totality to the debased present; the way that the world's fragility is overcome is through a rigorous historical mimeticism for Lukács, through the reembodiment of the noble epic "ideal" reconcretized in the "historical novel."

But this view of the epic, from our vantage point, can now be seen as a particular historical reconstruction of the Greeks, rooted in Enlightenment and Rationalist aesthetics. In fact, Winckelmann concludes the *Reflections*, "Let the artist's brush, like Aristotle's pen, be imbued with reason" (69). This rationalist view of the Greeks is transferred to Lukács's conception of the epic, which in turn is transformed

into a rationalist view of the novel. Lukács's category of the historical novel would include all novels which explicitly aim at the rendering of some form of "slice of life," in what I have previously earmarked as the novels of reportage and impressionism, but it is found in its most unadulterated form in the novels of tragic irony which explicitly aim at the rendition of historical consciousness.

In their recent *Novel Epics: Gogol, Dostoyevsky, and National Narrative*, Frederick T. Griffiths and Stanley J. Rabinowitz undertake a reevaluation of the relationship between epic and novel, and in so doing, rethink the standard epic/novel opposition which has been the novel's overriding generic assumption. As the title *Novel Epics* suggests, Griffiths and Rabinowitz see the division between epic and novel as misleading. They do not see traditional epics as conforming to the authoritarian and patriarchal order--the received idea of the epic--as much as conventional interpretations would contend; instead, they view the epic as aligned with the rootlessness and indeterminacy which is often associated only with the novel. But Lukács, basing his assumptions on inherited rationalist aesthetics, is caught in this central misunderstanding of the nature of the epic.

Griffiths and Rabinowitz elaborate:

Since the novel is the later and currently generative form, some theorists like Lukács and Bakhtin have sought to define it by emphasizing its amorphousness, vitality, and open-endedness in contradistinction to that which the epic represents. Both assume that once material has flowed down to the novel and to the swamps of post-

Enlightenment consciousness from the Pierian spring of epic, it never flows back uphill....Yet the stable fulfilling age thus described [by Lukács] is not a heroic age so much as a patriarchal and authoritative one, whereas the *Iliad* is at least more insistently antiauthoritarian. (18)

Griffiths and Rabinowitz continue to point out that what Lukács considers attributes of the novel are fully as true in the epic. "The 'spiritual homelessness,' the ruptured linkage of code to feeling that Lukács sees as the death knell of the heroic age is in fact what sets Achilles apart from his peers" (19). Conceiving of the epic as an integrated and harmonious whole, therefore, distorts considerably one's perception of the novel:

Even as there had been no epic age, the assumption that there was one shapes the tradition and glamorizes epic ambitions, as they mix cultural imperialism and a quest for lost innocence.

Perfidious and uncontrollable as it may be for those who try to master it, epic has a tendency to become fixed and monolithic when viewed over the shoulder. Its definitive heroes are volatile, treacherous, or neurotic (Achilles, Odysseus, Aeneas); from afar, they are often mistaken for patriarchs. (21)

This fundamental misunderstanding of the epic when viewed "over the shoulder" serves wrongly to structure a world of patriarchy and imperialism as normative. When the novel is measured by this standard, its dominant tone becomes increasingly tragic--and nostalgic--as the main character type engages fruitlessly in worldly pursuits.

The American novel transforms the received idea of the epic considerably. In America, as in Russia, since both nations came into self-consciousness at a time when the novel was the dominant international medium, the novel became the

vehicle for the epic impulse. That trend continued as the novel developed in the twentieth century, particular in Faulkner who rises to the stature of an American Homer, and has intensified to the present time in the novels of Morrison and Allende. All of these novelists are epic, not in the sense of setting forth a harmonious world, but in that they all participate in the epic enterprise of reinvigorating the memory of a people in the quest, not for domination or imperial ambition, but for the creation of a new cultural myth.

The gulf between the real and the ideal in the historical novel produces a negative irony in one's experience of the world that manifests, as Lukács terms it, "the self-correction of the world's fragility" (*Theory* 75). There is an unbridgeable gulf between the harmonious world of the epic and its disintegrated form in the modern novel. As Maire Kurrik remarks in her essay "On Georg Lukács":

The permanent dilemma is that the art of the novel cannot be authentic unless it expresses the luxation and dissonance of the world, and yet it cannot be artistically successful, unless in so doing, it finds a way of overcoming dislocation. (110)

Thus we see the paradoxical attitude toward the epic as it is embodied in the novel: the hero of the novel must struggle to attain meaning, despite the knowledge of his final defeat and of the "final victory of reality" (*Theory* 85). Lukács elaborates:

Indeed, the irony is a double one in both directions. It extends not only to the profound hopelessness of the struggle but still more the profound hopelessness of its abandonment--the pitiful failure of the intention to adapt to a world which is a stranger to ideals, to abandon the unreal ideality of the soul for the sake of achieving mastery over reality. (*Theory* 85-86)

Often this hopelessness induces in the hero a psychic dissonance and obsessive melancholia, characteristics often found in nineteenth-century novels Lukács considers emblematic.

This prevailing pessimism in the nineteenth-century European novel was noted by Ortega y Gasset in his *Meditations on Quixote*:

These generations from which we are directly descended had taken a fatal stand. In *Quixote* the balance of poetic sensibility was already tipping towards the side of bitterness and it has not even in our own day fully recovered. The nineteenth century, our parent, has felt a perverse delight in pessimism: it has wallowed in it, it has drunk it to the last drop and has compressed the world in such a way that nothing lofty could remain standing. (164)

This pessimism, rooted in the defective reception of classical culture through neoclassicism, and promulgated in the Naturalism of Norris, Crane, and Dreiser, is minimized in the romance tradition of the novel, and subverted in the best epic strain of the American novel.

The epic struggle that is illustrated in the "historical novel" is not the achievement of a world, but of a self: the integrated but pessimistic bourgeois. This self is

structured negatively toward action and the world; there is no Kierkegaardian leap to overcome the absence of God.³

Thus the heroic quest towards the founding of a city as set forth in the traditional epic is transformed into the tragic realization of the soul as essential: "For such a soul," Lukács states, "every road leads to the essence--leads home--for to this soul its selfhood *is* its home" (*Theory* 87). But at the other extreme of the integrated soul stands the grand movement of history and the collective aspirations of the nation. The epic thus becomes the simultaneous pursuit of the singular and collective as the individual seeks his fulfillment in the "imagined community" of national identity and destiny.

The epic, for Lukács, is realized in the novel form specifically in what he terms the "Historical Novel." The historical novel arose after Napoleon's collapse and is most fully developed in the novels of Walter Scott. It is significant to note that the exemplary novel for Lukács is English--the European nation which had such a durable version of a national character, and which succeeded in reproducing it throughout the world. Lukács tries to subsume other

³Maire Jaanus Kurrik in *Literature and Negation* explains the negative ironic aspect of Lukács's work well: "Irony is not an experience of faith, but merely the apprehension of a possible pale and distant relationship between the novelist's present formative urges and the form of a past totality in the epic or a future totality to come" (105). The unity of the novel is, unlike the epic, negative for Lukács. See also Gary J. Handwerk, *Irony and Ethics in Narrative* for an examination of the mechanics of irony in the novel.

national traditions in his theory of the novel such as the French Balzac, the Czech Kafka, and the German Mann, but with less obvious success.

By the historical, Lukács does not mean a novel with a particular setting or theme in the past, but the "derivation of the individuality of the characters from the historical peculiarity of the age" (Lukács, *Historical* 19). Here we see that the central tenet of the novel as he defines it is not merely a stylistic prerogative, but a demand dictated by the exigencies of history. The historical novel does not seek to understand the past as past but only to the extent that it hinges on the present. As G.H.R. Parkinson, a leading critic of Lukács, explains, "The historical novelist, [Lukács notes], is trying to understand the present, and his interest in the past is directed to a genuine prehistory of the present" (98). To understand the present, one must understand the inner workings of historical necessity, and it is the purpose of the novel, for Lukács, to reveal these relations.

The fundamental fixation on "presentness" in the novel is significant in situating the basic position of the past in the novel tradition. Lukács would certainly see the novel as a "new" manifestation, a genre that breaks quite radically with its forebears. As such, he would agree with Walter L. Reed's definition of the novel as "a long prose fiction which opposes the forms of everyday life, social and psychological, to the conventional forms of literature, classical or

popular, inherited from the past....[The novel] is inherently antitraditional in its literary code" (Reed, *Exemplary* 3-4). The novel is on the side of historical progress, and counters the reactionary forces of the past.

This oppositional stance of the novel is the common view. The novel, of all the genres, is the literary upstart, the breaker of conventions, the proponent, and indeed, the agent of progress and revolution. It is certainly the case that many novels are discontinuous with the recent past; but whether they are in rebellion to all of the past is another question. Certainly, in an atavistic model, while the novel rebels against a recent past, it recuperates an older pattern of action encased in a collective memory.

Toni Morrison would see the novel as involved in the process of memory, and as such is intimately engaged with the past. In this way, the novel performs an act of creation, and not only rebellion. As Morrison observes, "Memory (the deliberate act of remembering) is a willed form of creation. It is not an effort to find out the way it really was--that is research. (Morrison, "Memory" 335). The American novel extends the reach of the temporal, reaching farther back in history for its sources and foundations, and, at the same time, propelling itself into the future. Seen in this way, the American canon takes a different "chronotopic" posture towards history than the mainstream European tradition evinces.

The core of realism, as previously noted, is its ability to coalesce in a particular character the manifold historical forces at work. In Walter Scott, Lukács finds this feature manifested to a superior degree: "Scott endeavors to portray the struggles and antagonisms of history by means of characters who, in their psychology and destiny, always represent social trends and historical forces" (*Historical* 34). A conception of character "type" is central as a technique of representation for Lukács; the character who is most "typical" best exemplifies the forces of the epoch.

Lukács places such importance on the formation of character, in part, because he sees the inner form of the novel as biographical. The inner form of the novel, Lukács states, is "the process of the problematic individual's journeying towards himself, the road from dull captivity within a merely present reality--a reality that is heterogeneous in itself and meaningless to the individual--towards clear self-recognition" (*Theory* 80). The development of character is all important because the character must create a world out of his own experience. But the character, important as he is, is only an instrument in the centripetal forces of history, and "his central position in the work means only that he is particularly well suited to reveal a certain problematic of life" (*Theory* 83).

There are then two forces at work in the historical novel: first, the formation of a particular and unique character as

crystallized in the bourgeois; and secondly, the history of a specific people, embodied in the formation of the nation-state, of which the bourgeois is emblematic. As such, the representative character is simultaneously supremely individual and fully expressive of the forces of an age, unlike either the eccentric or the marginal figure. Nor is the "type" an "everyman" figure; the bourgeois is not the site of general questions of life, but of specific forces of history. Thus we see that the novel always maintains a movement toward the center; indeed, if we were to imagine the form of the novel as Lukács characterizes it, it would be centric with respect to character, and linear with regard to history. The focus on the typical avoids consideration of the forces at work in those who are historically (and figurally) eccentric and marginal. Lukács elaborates this concept in his essay "Critical Realism and Socialist Realism":

What is the key to these "typical" heroes of literature? The typical is not to be confused with the average (though there are cases where this holds true), nor with the eccentric (though the typical does as a rule go beyond the normal). A character is typical, in this technical sense, when his innermost being is determined by the objective forces at work in the society. (*Realism* 122)

The typical according to Peter Demetz must have four predominant characteristics: breadth, essentiality, enhancement, and self-awareness. (Demetz 209) The typical must have a richness and complexity of character, must express the universal, must have a latent "messianic"

awareness, and must serve as the sounding board for universal historical propositions.

Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Destructive Character" takes the mood of pessimism in the bourgeois type one step further. The destructive character, like Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!*, "knows only one watchword: make room; only one activity: clearing away. His need for fresh air and open space is stronger than any hatred" ("Destructive" 301). The destructive character is plagued by a troubling mimesis, infinitely reproducing desires. Benjamin continues:

No vision inspires the destructive character. He has few needs, and the least of them is to know what will replace what has been destroyed. First of all, for a moment at least, empty space, the place where the thing stood or the victim lived. Someone is sure to be found who needs this space without its being filled.

The destructive character does his work, the only work he avoids is being creative. Just as the creator seeks solitude, the destroyer must be constantly surrounded by people, witnesses to his efficacy....

The destructive character stands in the front line of traditionalists. Some pass things down to posterity, by making them untouchable and thus conserving them, others pass on situations, by making them practicable and thus liquidating them. The latter are called destructive.

The destructive character has the consciousness of historical man....

The destructive character lives from the feeling, not that life is worth living, but that suicide is not worth the trouble. (301-303)

Besides Thomas Sutpen, Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*, and Percy Grimm in *Light in August*, subscribe to the qualities of Benjamin's destructive apotheosis. But even as they act out their reflexive mimesis, they participate unwittingly in a creative mechanism. According to Bainard

Cowan in "America Between Two Myths: *Moby Dick* as Epic," the character of Ahab, a similarly destructive type, furthers the birth of a new myth of America:

It is the genius of Ahab's enactment that in making manifest the hidden premises of the modern world view, he betrays it, and he does so out of a deep, only dimly discerned desire to betray it in the name of all he has betrayed. His is the visceral neural logic of the destructive character. (238)

In all of his qualities, the destructive character subscribes to the enlightened epic caricature of the heroic, embodying the "consciousness of the historical man," who by making situations practical, participates in their liquidation. Contrasted to those who "pass things down to posterity, by making them untouchable and thus conserving them," the destructive character acts as a type of anti-ancestor, an avatar of the destruction of time and memory.

While the destructive character bears a central relation to the content of an age, the ancestor is an eccentric force who falls outside the boundary of representation. Neither eccentrics from "above" or from "below" are representative of the historical forces of the age. Lukács elaborates further in his essay "The Historical Novel and Democratic Humanism":

What is the aim of the historical novel? First, it is to portray the kind of individual destiny that can directly and at the same time typically express the problems of an epoch. The modern novel in its shift to the world "above" has portrayed destinies which are socially eccentric. Eccentric because the upper sections of society have ceased to be the leaders of progress for an entire nation....

The lack of such a connection can just as easily be the case in novels which seem to deal directly with popular life, which aim to portray life from "below"....It is not a question of the

psychological truth of an individual case or the sociographic and descriptive authenticity of the milieu. It is the content of the story that matters. (*Historical* 284)

It is clear that Lukács's theories are a valuable tool for analyzing a certain type of novel. And I would contend that Lukács has been, largely without credit, the major formative influence on critical interpretation. His focus on character development, on historical relations, coupled with the overall tinge of negative irony and tragic insufficiency are included among the most common assumptions that the most sophisticated readers bring to the novel.

Though Lukács's theory seems most applicable to the English and Continental novel tradition, there is a large body of criticism which analyzes Faulkner and Latin-American writing from this perspective. But the dream of a harmonious totality that is set as the omnipresent background for the entanglements of history has skewed the collective imagination and the critical reception of "Southern" literatures. Yet, perhaps it was this proclivity for nostalgia that forced the novel--and Faulkner--to check the disintegration of reality, to raise a voice against the rising pessimism. By the time he delivered his famous Nobel Prize speech, Faulkner tapped into the latent power of literature to denounce the world's own void and disorder.

It seems that the creative power of the Lukács model, therefore, was subsiding as Faulkner matured as a writer. The French architect with Parisian hat and frock coat was an

anachronism before he got to Frenchman's Bend, and his project was destined to be incomplete. *Absalom, Absalom!* marks the apex of Faulkner's tragic consciousness and forms, in a sense, his initial major critique, six years before *Go Down, Moses*, of the mimetic worldview.

What then will be the afterlife of Lukács's reading of the novel and history? Lukács insufficiently accounts for the dissonant voices in the American novel; his reading of the novel and history too neatly coalesces around a specific character who represents a unified perspective of historical consciousness. And since his model is an idealistic one, his prominent types must always voice a tragic discontent with the world. This perspective is at variance with that view of the world emanating from Cervantes, the perspective which sees history and the world as a question to be answered, and not the answer itself. This alternate perspective, which sees the novel as the "echo of God's laughter," (Kundera, *Art* 158) is as much a part of the legacy of European consciousness as is its tragic element.

The value of Lukács's theories will remain, however, in exposing the mimeticism such a view generates. The replicative tendency generated by the tragic abyss between the Greeks and the moderns is repeated in individual desires and collective imperial ambitions--two influences which have affected the modern world profoundly.

In the nineteenth century, the theoretical interest in the novel was led by German Romanticism, most notably by

Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. The aphoristic and fragmentary style of both authors could hardly be less similar to Lukács's lucid, rigorous, systematic, neoclassical approach. In their writing, historical forces recede into the background, as the transformative power of the imagination is given precedence. Myth, the uncanny, positive irony, and the eccentric replace the historical consciousness of the bourgeois gentleman and an ordered image of the world.

ii. German Romanticism: Poietic Irony and the Roman

I am thinking, for example of Novalis, who rediscovered the "dialectic of the sacred," to wit, that nature such as it shows itself to us, does not represent absolute reality but is only a cipher. His extraordinary intuition: that it is not necessary to die, to become a "spirit," in order to communicate with higher worlds, and that, beginning here below, one can know beatific experience. Some day someone must point out how ancient, even archaic, were the ideas of Novalis: one must also try to explain due to what circumstances these ideas were so long forgotten or voluntarily ignored.

(Eliade, *No Souvenirs* 326)

If we can see the movement in Lukács as a tendency toward a progressive interiority as history focuses itself in the bourgeois ego, then in German Romanticism, and particularly in Schlegel and Novalis, lies a counter tradition, where the inclination is to range freely through the cosmos as they explore the farthest reaches of the powers of the imagination. In addition, the Romanticism of Schlegel and Novalis is characterized by a sense of possibility and optimism--and prophecy--at least in regard to the literary

theory which they espoused. As Diana Behler remarks, "One can genuinely say that the literary theory of the Athenäum was prophetic, in that it anticipated many literary forms, devices and features which did not actually appear in literary works until a much later date" (5). It is not my purpose here to uncover all of the elements of Romanticism,⁴ but only to comment on those aspects of literary form which promote a deeper understanding of the American novel.

Ernst Curtius praises Schlegel's critical output and notes his central role in sifting the wheat from the chaff of literary history. Curtius puts Schlegel in the same company as Homer and Goethe, but in the realm of criticism:

European literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century has not yet been sifted, what is dead has not yet been sifted from what is alive. It can furnish subjects for dissertations. But the final word upon it belongs not to literary history but to literary criticism. For that in Germany, we have Friedrich Schlegel--and beginnings. (16)

Schlegel is one of those thinkers whose genius is only recognized much after the fact; his theories of the novel

⁴Lillian R. Furst in *The Contours of European Romanticism* explores the wide range of what we know as the Romantic movement and its inversions: the pursuit of the beautiful turns into the discovery of the grotesque; the dream vision becomes the nightmare; the faculty of genius is converted into the demonic hero. It is not my purpose here to develop all of these strains; my concentration is on the early German Romantics and their insights into the novel and literary form. It is my contention that at this point the movement has a largely positive character; it seeks to overcome the narrow limits of rationalism and the Enlightenment, and wants to expand the purview of literary and cultural study. Hence my characterization of the movement as optimistic and forward-looking.

were more prophetic than descriptive of any novels that were known by his contemporaries.

While Romanticism in the English tradition focused the understanding of poetry, German Romanticism focused attention on the novel. But Schlegel's understanding differs considerably from the novel tradition; in fact he does not really speak of the novel, of course, writing in German, but of the *Roman*. While the word novel, derived from the Italian *novella*, carries the meaning of newness, the *roman* has a more ancient and complex genealogy. *Roman* is associated with the Latin *Romanus*, which referred to the ascendant vernacular languages and the close of the Roman Empire.⁵

In his analysis of the *roman*, Curtius observes several salient features: the *roman* initially arose at the point when the major discourse, learned Latin, was in decline; the *roman* is associated with the vernacular, the common tongue; the *roman* shows broad cross-cultural kinships as it adapted to a

⁵Curtius's helpful etymology of the word *roman* illustrates the broad spectrum of nationality and influences that the romance tradition gathers together: "'Romance' is the name that the early Middle Ages gave to the new Latin vernaculars, precisely in conscious contrast to the language of the learned, Latin. The words derived from *romanicus* and the adverb *romanice* (in French, Provençal, Spanish, Italian, Rhaeto-Romanic) are never used as national names (there were other words for the purpose), but as the names of those languages--in the same sense, then as the Italian *volgare*. The Old French *romanz*, the Spanish *romance*, the Italian *romanzo* are such derivatives. They were coined by the Latin-educated class and signify all Romance languages. They were regarded as a unity in contrast to Latin. *Enromancier*, *romanzar*, *romanzare*, mean: to translate or compose books in the vernacular. Such books could then be called *romanz*, *romant*, *roman*, *romance*, *romanzo*--all derivatives from *romanice*" (32).

variety of national contexts. The *roman*, curiously, shows a tendency to manifest itself when a dominant discourse is in recession. Further, since the *roman* tends to respect a local genius, it manifests an inner translatability, located at the deepest roots of the genre, that is at variance with the novel tradition. In other words, the representative capacities of the *roman* seem broader than the novel; the *roman* has a relative in most national contexts, whereas the novel, especially the English novel, as it is exported throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, always bears the imprint of the English model as something either adhered to or rejected. This difficulty in the English novel is abundantly illustrated in the case of the African novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who, while realizing the imperialism of the English language on African literature, gives little attention to the more important dominance of the realistic form.⁶ Form and genre, and not merely language, it would seem, also affect the overall possibilities in cultural representation.

Raymond Immerwahr, in his essay "The Word 'Romantisch' and its History," examines some of the divergent usages that

⁶See Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Ngugi speaks eloquently of the dislocating effect of colonial culture and notes that language is not only a means of communication but the carrier of a culture. Thus the way that language is used and patterned effectively creates or, in the case of a colonial language, invents a culture. In Africa, "bourgeois Europe was always the centre of the universe" (17), a situation enabled by the double effect of the language of the colonizer and the literary form in which it is contained.

the *roman* has undergone. "Schlegel," he states, "was always conscious of the source of the adjective 'romantisch' in the noun 'Roman'" (51). Schlegel was sufficiently astute to refer to *roman*'s original resonances, rather than the later accretions which rendered it as a "prose novel." But Immerwahr continues, "Schlegel was not so much concerned with recapturing the particular qualities of historical romances as in pointing the way toward the creation of a new romance, a universal work of art designed to be read but synthesizing all literary forms and styles" (51). It is characteristic of Schlegel to "flatten out" history, reaching back into the distant past, and looking toward the unseen but imagined future, in his view of the novel. Lukács, in a contrasting point of emphasis, is very "present-minded"; the novel is the carrier for the present field of social relations and illustrates their progression in history.

In his "Letter About the Novel," Schlegel gives a short definition: "The Novel," he says, "is a romantic book" (*Dialogue* 101). In the same essay, he gives a notion of what he means by his comprehensive term "romantic":

Just as our literature began with the novel, so the Greek began with the epic and dissolved in it.

The difference is, however, that the Romantic is not so much a literary genre, as an element of poetry which may be more or less dominant or recessive, but never entirely absent. It must be clear to you why, according to my views, I postulate that all poetry should be Romantic and why I detest the novel so far as it wants to be a separate genre. (*Dialogue* 101)

From this short passage, we see that "Romantic" is less a period than a major literary trope, a trope that infuses all writing in all periods, like a gene that may be dominant or recessive at different times. As Michael Holquist and Walter Reed remark, "Romanticism is the theoretical novelization of European literature, and Romantic poetry and drama themselves often follow a novelistic vector" (Holquist 421). Thus Schlegel sees all poetry as somewhat "novelized" or "romanticized"; he refuses to view the novel as a genre which, having risen during propitious historical circumstances, inevitably, with a changed landscape reaches a point of exhaustion. Thus, when Schlegel speaks of the novel, he is not speaking of a separate genre; he is not speaking of the novel associated with the onset of literacy, the rise of the individual, or the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. For Schlegel we can say that the novel, then, is less a genre than a medium which can assume different forms at different times.

Schlegel sets forth in his famous *Athenaeum Fragment 116* his aspiration and vision for "romantic poetry":

Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn't merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It tries to and should fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical; poeticize wit and fill and saturate the forms of art with every kind of good, solid matter for instruction, and animate them with the pulsations of humor. ("Fragments" 176)

Here we see that the "Romantic" has a synthesizing function, uniting disparate elements, both formally and thematically, into one comprehensive, unified whole. It contains a progressive universalizing tendency that brings in these diverse components, and in so doing, takes on a cosmic, or epic, range of experience. Schlegel continues,

It alone can become like the epic, a mirror of the whole circumambient world, an image of the age. And it can also--more than any other form--hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors. It is capable of the highest and most variegated refinement, not only from within outwards, but also from without inwards; capable in that it organizes --for everything that it seeks a wholeness in its effects--the parts along similar lines, so that it opens up a perspective upon an infinitely increasing classicism. ("Fragments" 176)

This observation echoes the sentiments of many contemporary novelists on the possibilities of the novel for creative expression. Faulkner makes a parallel observation about his own writing in his famous "Interview with Jean Stein vanden Heuvel":

Beginning with Sartoris I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and by sublimating the actual to apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top. It opened up a goldmine of peoples, so I created a cosmos of my own. (Faulkner, *Interview* 255)

For Schlegel, the epic (and *roman*) constructs a grand and diverse cosmos, a "circumambient world"; similarly, for Faulkner, his "postage stamp of native soil" becomes a

"cosmos of [his] own." Faulkner follows Schlegel in seeing in the novel the potential to enunciate a cosmic, rather than merely an historical consciousness. In Faulkner, a cosmic delineation was accomplished through experimentation with diverse narrative frameworks which enabled him to "hover at the midpoint between the portrayer and the portrayed, free of all real and ideal self interest." In order to accomplish this feat, the poet--or novelist--requires a certain "negative capability," that capacity that Keats describes as dwelling in uncertainty and creative mystery, giving up the poetic ego so that a "wholeness" can be imagined. This detachment is realized for Schlegel in an imagination that organizes its material, not in a narrow classicism, but in one that is "infinitely increasing."

The form of the creative endeavor, moreover, is not merely a quest for representation, but the maximization of the reflective capacity in language. Schlegel enunciates this altered perspective in his "Talk on Mythology":

And is not this soft reflection of the godhead in man the actual soul, and kindling spark of all poetry? Mere representation of man, passions, and actions does not truly amount to anything, as little as using artificial forms does, even if you shuffle and turn over the old stuff together millions of times. (*Dialogue* 85)

Further, this world is not just mirrored, but reflected in an "endless succession of mirrors," a trope reminiscent of Borges, or Allende's infinite landscape. There is not just a whole world projected outward as if the novel were to put forward some alternate plan of reality, but also a projection

inward from without. Romantic poetry is capable of touching and encompassing all of the variegated refinements of the outer world which it puts in the form of the novel.

Clearly, it is only the novel that is capable of such a large, synthesizing function:

Romantic poetry is in the arts what wit is in philosophy, and what society and sociability, friendship and love are in life. Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being fully analysed. The Romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. It can be exhausted by no theory and only a divinatory criticism would dare try to characterize its ideal. It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free; and it recognizes as its first commandment that the will of the poet can tolerate no law above itself. The romantic kind of poetry is the only one that is more than a kind, that is as it were, poetry itself: For in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic. ("Fragments" 176)

The creative mission of the poet is ambitious; in exercising his creative prerogative "the will of the poet can tolerate no law above itself." But if it appears that Schlegel is giving the poet romantic license for infinite transgression and expansion of the poetic ego, this tendency is balanced by his concept of the poet's hovering between the "portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self interest, on the wings of poetic reflection." This expansive view of literature stands in stark contrast to the idea of the novel which Lukács sets forth. For Schlegel, the novel's hallmark as a genre is not its ability to distill action, but its capacity to contain diversity and otherness.

The way in which Schlegel characterizes this diversity is through his concept of the Arabesque. In the Arabesque, myth and wit, and all the manifold elements which Schlegel sees as possible in the novel come together. As Schlegel explains in his "Talk on Mythology":

Indeed, this [romantic poetry's] artfully ordered confusion, this charming symmetry of contradictions, this wonderfully perennial alteration of enthusiasm and irony which lives even in the smallest parts of the whole, seem to me to be an indirect mythology themselves. The organization is the same, and certainly the arabesque is the oldest and most original form of human imagination. (*Dialogue* 86)

In calling up the Arabesque as a paradigmatic structure, he is alluding to a model which is premodern, exotic, and grounded in a repetitive structure.⁷ To recast it in less arcane terms, one might say that the form of the novel is more like an epic tale, lay, or saga with mythic and archetypal overtones, rather than a straight and strict documentary record.

⁷Sandra Naddaff, in her *Arabesque: Narrative Structure and the Aesthetics of Repetition in 1001 Nights*, offers the following definition of the term: "The term arabesque is in its essence an orientalist expression created to signify a kind of artistic motif that the West saw as indigenous to the Arab East. Derived from the Italian word *Rabesco*, which was first used during the Italian Renaissance (1555) to refer to the style of a certain ornamental pattern particular to Islamic design,...the term came...later to signify both the condition of being Arabian or Arabic and, additionally, the condition of being strangely mixed or fantastic" (111). Naddaff continues to see the foundation of the Arabesque in the "repeat unit, the horizontal and vertical mirroring of the design which ensures its spatial perpetuation" (112). This repetitive design is characteristic of the tale, as she sees in *1001 Nights*.

Moreover, for Schlegel the novel is not merely a site for the mechanics of history, but is where the great questions of the epoch are worked out. In his well-known *Critical Fragment 26*, he states that "Novels are the Socratic dialogues of our time. And this free form has become the refuge of common sense in its flight from pedantry" ("Fragments" 145). This central Fragment locates the novel in a "dialogic" form, the content of which consists of the "enduring" questions, and not merely the representation of the historical. One can discover in the American novel Socratic content, particularly in the extended philosophical excursus, such as is found in the fourth part of "The Bear" in *Go Down, Moses*. Frequently these dialogues are cast in what Bakhtin would term "threshold dialogues," utterances fraught with urgency and free from pedantry.

Further, the concept of character, which is so central to the novel for Lukács, takes on greater attenuation for Schlegel. As he elaborates in *Athanaeum Fragment 118*, characters do not serve as ends only, but also as means for the larger action:

It's not even a subtle but actually a rather coarse titillation of the ego, when all the characters of a novel revolve around a single figure like the planets around the sun. And this central character usually turns out to be the author's own naughty little darling who then becomes the mirror and flatterer of the delighted reader. Just as a cultivated human being isn't merely an end but also a means both to himself and others, so too in the cultivated literary work all the characters should be both ends and means. ("Fragments" 176)

Schlegel's allusion to the "cultivated human being" as the end of representation in itself rather than as an agent to the action seems to be a direct hit at the convention of bourgeois representation which Lukács was to delimit a century later. Further, his metaphor of the sun as the central figure leaves open the possibility that there can be eccentric orbits--or other suns. Indeed, the idea of multiple centers and elliptical forms is significant for the shape of the novel. Marshall Brown in *The Shape of German Romanticism* sees the Romantic novel as "bicentral" in focus. In a sense, any novel carries not only its own action--an action which in turn is often conducted on two levels--but the development of its own potentiality as a genre.⁸

Schlegel moves away from the classical genres, as he had received them through neoclassicism, in order to reimagine literary forms. "All the classical poetical genres have now become ridiculous in their pure rigidity," he remarks in *Critical Fragment 60* ("Fragments" 150). Schlegel counters the centripetal tendencies of neoclassicism in his advocacy of marginal genres and motifs such as the Arabesque and the

⁸It is also significant to note the resonances of the term elliptical. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines an ellipse as a curve in which the sum of the distances of any point from the two foci is a constant quality. Thus any point on the curve bears the same relation to the center. Moreover, an elliptical remark is any one lacking in words which must be supplied to keep the sense. Thus the model of margin to center is relational, and not mimetic. And further, any action contains a certain indeterminacy to get the sense of the whole. There is a movement away from linearity in plot as a consequence, and the onset of what Bakhtin later called polyphonic discourses.

dialogue. Schlegel wants to change the orbit of literary criticism, it would seem, from its exclusive attention to character, to its broader intellectual and social content. As Victor Lange notes, "[The] essential purpose [of the mixed forms] is not the conveying of private feelings, but the establishment, through what Schlegel calls infinite or 'elliptical' discourse, of a community of opinion and perception" (299).

Schlegel's theory of the novel accounts for a conception of discourse and method of accounting for experience which can only be fully appreciated now as we survey the direction of the novel in the late twentieth century. Like Bakhtin's dialogical sensibility, the elliptical form takes the reader's expectations of the novel away from character formation and event, and looks toward "'allegorical arabesques' which are to evoke, primarily, our sense of the discrepancies and disproportions of life" (Lange 300).

Schlegel's attention to the mixed forms, and the generative forces of the chaotic, all point toward a "New Mythology," a new principle of order which he envisions in culture in his "Talk on Mythology":

Our poetry, I maintain, lacks a focal point, such as mythology was for the ancients; and one could summarize all the essentials in which modern poetry is inferior to the ancient in these words: We have no mythology. But, I add, we are close to obtaining one or, rather, it is time that we earnestly work together to create one. (*Dialogue* 81)

Clearly, Schlegel is not concerned with resurrecting the old myths, but with the active creation of a new one which will encompass all the others. Eric Blackall considers Schlegel's notion of mythology to be "the organizing of the disparate 'chaos' of experience into a meaningful and therefore 'harmonious' whole" (31). Further, Blackall remarks, citing Schlegel, "All mythology [for Schlegel] is the hieroglyphic expression of surrounding nature as transfigured by human imagination and love" (32). Mythology makes a "sacred marking" on history, displacing the record of the ego with the record of the soul.⁹

The concept of the hieroglyphic is germane not only for Schlegel but also Novalis, and to German Romanticism generally. Liselotte Dieckmann sees the concept of the hieroglyphic as at the center of Romantic thinking:

The work of art, although the focusing point of most Romantic theories, is never "the thing itself," but always a reflection of the higher truth as revealed in nature. Nature is a hieroglyph of God; and art is a hieroglyph of nature and God. God himself, in the act of creation, wrote, as a work of art, the book of nature; man, the image of God, writes, in his creative act, the book of art....Thus, the hieroglyph of art is not an "arbitrary sign"; it is

⁹This phrasing is extracted from William Irwin Thompson, *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light: Mythology, Sexuality, and the Origins of Culture*: "Mythology is the history of the soul. The history of the ego, with its succession of kings and empires, technologies and wars, is what we are taught in school. As the lie commonly agreed upon, history becomes the apology for whatever class is in power or wishes to come to power....The revisioning of history is, therefore, a revolutionary act. It challenges the legitimacy of a description of reality, and the class of scribes who write that description" (247).

the very key that opens the path of the soul; it is, in Swedenborg's language, a hieroglyphic key leading to, and expressing, the innermost secrets of life. (310-311)

In the hieroglyphic expression--those sacred figures of the text--one finds a sign that is both recondite and unfamiliar. This hieroglyphic mode of signification in nineteenth-century American literature is elaborated by John T. Irwin in his study *American Hieroglyphic: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance*.¹⁰ The hieroglyph combines two key motifs relevant to German and American Romanticism: the simultaneous inscription of otherness with the sacred.

For Schlegel, the irony that is native to the novel fluctuates between the absence of one element and its subsequent recreation. As he says in *Ideas* 51, "irony is the clear consciousness of eternal agility, of an infinitely teeming chaos" ("Fragments" 247). In this indeterminate

¹⁰John T. Irwin in *American Hieroglyphic: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance*, cites Guillaume Oegger's "The True Messiah" (1842) as an example of the method of hieroglyphic interpretation. Both nature and the Bible are written in hieroglyphic and need interpretation. Irwin quotes Oegger: "Man is the true hieroglyphic of the Divinity; a hieroglyphic, infinite in its details, even when man is considered only as a material form, since his material form itself, is but the emblem of his moral being....All animals, by their corporeal forms, as well as by their instincts, are hieroglyphics of the different degradations of human nature, or of detached parts of human nature called man" (25). Oegger continues to see form, color, direction and orientation, number, as well as the human and animal as "simple keys by means of which [one] can penetrate into the immense domains of nature" (Oegger 333). The notion of the American novel as a form of hieroglyph is highly suggestive: the preponderance of sacred markings, runic speech, mythic animals, and random gaming in the novel all point to the fruitfulness of this line of interpretation.

space, the novel inhabits a creative indeterminacy where it is possible to discover a new world of poetic language and interpretation. Thus, out of the variety of components in the novel comes the discovery of novelty. As Schlegel writes in *Ideas 71*, "Confusion is chaotic only when it can give rise to a new world" (Schlegel 247).

Schlegel is important in the current consideration of the novel for several reasons. The association of the novel with romantic poetry anticipates the development of the novel's capacity for poesis and discovery. Schlegel saw the limitations of a mimetic world view and recognized, in the middle of modernity, the problem of representation. Azade Seyhan credits the German Romantics, and Schlegel in particular, for recognizing what post-structuralism was later to confirm and elaborate. The innovative minds of the German Romantics, notes Seyhan, enabled them to see beyond the limitations of their time:

Faced with an unrepresentable chaos on the political and intellectual landscape, the Romantic mind initiates a discursive plan intent on inventing new paradigms of understanding and redefining the objectives of criticism and representation. This project, if one can call it such, is nevertheless neither self-avowedly innovative nor theoretical in a strict sense. The Jena Romantics see it as the creation of a "new mythology." The very term denotes the impulse to look for appropriate conceptual models in the past. The archaeology of these models in itself is not the major task. Once found they need to be fragmented, realigned, and resynthesized in order to be conceptually useful in a new age. Novalis states that the problem of representation "needs, by all means, to be called in another language." (Seyhan 6)

This "other" language for both Schlegel and Novalis is the poietic. In acknowledging the defects of representation, Schlegel makes the turn to myth and poiesis, and assembles a view of literature's possibilities rather than despairs at the prospect of lost essence.

Novalis shares many of Schlegel's concerns with literary form--in particular the problem of representation and reflection¹¹--and cultural renewal. Unlike those who were influenced by Winckelmann and the neoclassical version of the epic/novel opposition, Novalis saw the opportunities in the novel form. In *Logological Fragment 34* he states:

The poetry of primitive people is a narrative without beginning, middle, or end. The pleasure that it gives them is merely pathological--simply pastime, mere dynamic activation of the power of imagination.

Epic poetry is the ennobled form of primitive poetry. In essence, altogether the same. The novel already stands much higher. The former continues, the latter grows. In the former there is a rhythmic progression, in the novel geometric. (Quoted in Willson 69)

¹¹For a discussion of Novalis's theory of reflection and representation and how it anticipates the later constructions and deconstructions see Gezá von Molnár's *Romantic Vision, Ethical Context: Novalis and Artistic Autonomy*, in particular the Foreword, "Do We Need a Revival of Transcendental Philosophy?" by Jochen Schulte-Sasse. For a comprehensive study of Novalis's thought, consult the lucid presentation in Kristin Pfefferkorn, *Novalis: A Romantic's Theory of Language and Poetry*. Also helpful is Alice A. Kuzinar's *Delayed Endings: Nonclosure in Novalis and Hölderlin*. Azade Seyhan in *Representation and its Discontents: The Critical Legacy of German Romanticism*, perceptively relates German Romanticism to contemporary literary theory.

The novel, unexpectedly, is higher than the already elevated epic. Novalis sees the capacity of the novel to reflect the whole world, and it can do so on the wings of high culture.

To be faithful to representation, however, the novel must contain diverse elements. As Novalis says of Schlegel in *Anecdote 206*, "Schlegel is right, the true novel must be a satire....A book brings about, like everything, thousands of sensations and functions--determinate, defined, and free" (Quoted in Willson 73). By satire, Novalis seems to imply that the novel is a mixed genre, encompassing a diversity of thought and expression, anticipating what Bakhtin later discovered as heteroglossia. In it, diverse and often conflicting elements are brought together not just by a textual irony, but by an overall "transcendental" unity.

Novalis differs from Schlegel in this invocation not just to irony, but to spirit. As Novalis states, "What Friedrich Schlegel characterizes so sharply as irony is actually, as I see it, the result of and kin of true reflection--the veritable presence of the spirit. Schlegel's irony seems to me true humor" (Quoted in Willson 65). While Schlegel releases the novel from mimetic strictures, he tends to see the genre as a pure play of language, a pure ironic trope. Novalis, however, raises novelistic expression to a higher plane than simple irony; the novel is capable of reflecting questions of the spirit as it engages the real and the ideal simultaneously. As Diana Behler states,

Thus although a novel deals with and depicts life, it does not strive for a naturalistic presentation of the real world. The natural world from which the poet extracts events and character from his novel is limited, whereas an idea can be infinite. So the novel is a realization of an idea rather than a true reproduction of the world, and like an idea, enjoys limited scope. (106)

The limitations of the representation of nature in a mimetic theory is overcome by metaphysics. Novalis and the Romantics strove to get beyond mere material and historical relations and engage fully the imaginary realm. Walter Jens has remarked:

What counts for Hardenberg [Novalis] is not the fact itself, but the spirit apportioned to this fact by the inspired ego, the freely chosen, self-determined mediator. It is not reality, but possibility, not the factual but what is believed to be probable, meaningful, consoling, and necessary by millions of people, here in this way, there in that, which defines in the eyes of the romantic poet-priest true history, the kind that promotes the awareness of salvation and the creation of meaning. (172)

For Novalis, the manner in which the real gets converted to the ideal is through a type of translation. The finite must be seen in light of the infinite, the local in light of the cosmic, and the literal in terms of the mythic, the highest mode of translation:

A translation is either grammatical or transforming or mythic. Mythic translations are translations in the supreme sense. They set forth the pure, ultimate character of the individual work of art.... This calls for a brain fully possessed by the poetical and the philosophic spirit. Greek mythology is in part such a translation of a national religion. (Quoted in Willson 65)

Whether in literary form, or in translation, Novalis's consistent concern is that the novel be suffused with the

"poetical spirit" in order to effect a metamorphosis of the everyday, what Faulkner, in his quest for "translation" discovered in "sublimating the actual to apocryphal."

At this point it might be helpful to summarize this array of quotation to try to determine what bearing the theories of the German Romantics have for an understanding of the novel at the present time. First, Schlegel enunciates a concept of irony as a positive value and a form of the novel as affirmative in tone and purpose. Second, Schlegel sees the novel as open-ended in scope, as "infinitely increasing," and intuits its capacity for bringing together diverse elements in an indeterminate unity. Third, Schlegel's concept of diversity includes otherness, as revealed in his invocation of the Arabesque. Fourth, the novel moves away from strict representation and permits myth and imagination to work over the raw materials of history. Fifth, both Schlegel, in appealing to the hieroglyphic image, and Novalis, in soliciting a sense of spirit, sees in the novel the ability to uncover the unexpressible and unseen layers of history, its "magical" content.

Schlegel and Novalis, in their vague and cryptic aphorisms, prepare the ground and give the seeds (one of Novalis's collections of fragments is called "Pollen") for a renewed understanding of the novel. They realized the novel's importance to culture and relationship to myth,

attributes which theorists and novelists are examining and developing at the present time.

iii. Russian Literature and Criticism as Alternate Model

There was [for Dostoyevsky], however, a vehicle for such a composite creation, which, without being especially fit for a Dionysiac state of mind, was at least Protean--that is to say, so fluid and transmutable that it seemed bound to no set form, comprising, with equal readiness and flexibility, narration and commentary, dialogue and soliloquy, the telescopic and the microscopic, the dithyrambic and the analytical. Moreover, it prided itself on being the representative art-form of the present time, and even dared to challenge comparison with the great art-forms of the past. After all, why shouldn't the new chariot of Dionysus make its entry along the crowded highway of the novel.

(Ivanov, *Freedom* 6)

The tradition of the nineteenth-century Russian novel provides an alternative context to both the Tragic-Ironic and the Romantic-Fantastic models. The Russian novel has never really conformed to the main tenets of realism, nor to the major currents of romanticism; instead, it has drawn on a number of influences and resources which treat metaphysical themes through manifold literary devices and through a panoply of eccentric character types.¹² As John Garrard states:

¹²As Edward Wasiolek begins his essay "Design in the Russian Novel": "The nineteenth-century Russian novel is a literature of sloth, idlers, parasites, swindlers, cripples, crooks, phrase mongers, charlatans, rapists, tramps and con-men, but always of beautiful dreamers" (51).

The novels of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy explore metaphysical and moral dilemmas that the Western reader is more likely to associate with classical tragedy or the *Dialogues* of Plato. But it is precisely in the novel the Russians found their vehicle for the discussion of ideas. (5)

The critical tradition which surrounds Russian literature reflects this difference in emphasis.¹³ In using the novel to develop ideas, the Russian novel bears an intimate kinship with the the American canon. Novels, when written in the service of metaphysics rather than stylistics, are less preoccupied with realist imperatives.

Dostoevsky has been the main spokesman for this alternate tradition against realism. As Dostoevsky said himself, "That which the majority call almost fantastic and exceptional, for me sometimes constitutes the very essence of the real. Commonplace phenomena and a conventional view of them is, in my opinion, no longer realism, but even the contrary" (Mochulsky 382). This ongoing critique of realism continues among the most perceptive of the critics of the Russian novel, culminating in our own time in Bakhtin.

An earlier Dostoevsky critic, Vyacheslav Ivanov, quoted in the epigraph above, sees the possibilities in the novel to

¹³The major phase of criticism of Russian novels has tended to focus on either Dostoevsky or Tolstoy. For a survey of the Russian criticism surrounding Dostoevsky see Vladimir Seduro, ed. *Dostoyevski in Russian Literary Criticism: 1846-1956*. The struggle between Tolstoy the historical novelist, and Dostoevsky, the metaphysician, is analogous to the continuing debate in the Euro-American context between the novel and the romance. It is indicative that Lukács's primary Russian model is Tolstoy; he never mentions Dostoevsky. Bakhtin's primary model, on the other hand, is Dostoevsky.

encompass a broad spectrum of reality; even, as he remarks, the crowded highway of the novel can accommodate the "new chariot of Dionysus." This is a highly suggestive formulation, given the affinities of the Russian and American contexts.¹⁴ On one level, Ivanov's invocation of Dionysus is analogous to what D.H. Lawrence in the American context would call the "blood-consciousness," the connection with the earth, with violence and destruction as the necessary precursor to cultural renewal and new life, as opposed to a more cerebral cultural trope which Lawrence terms "mind-consciousness." The Apollonian, which Lukács manifests in his appropriation of Winckelmann, has been the dominant European motif; the Dionysian, in contrast, is the fit cult for the New World where life is more bound to the earth, to

¹⁴The affinity between Faulkner and Dostoevsky was noted by Jean Weisgerber in *Faulkner et Dostoïévski: Confluences et Influences*. Weisgerber notes that America and Russia have occupied a similar position towards Europe: "L'Américain et le Russe occupent, en effet, des positions similaires qui leur permettent de condamner l'Europe. On a mémoire des attaques virulentes de Muichkine et de Chatov contre Rome, le socialisme et l'athéisme, autant des produits, selon L'idiot, d'un Occident qu'Isaac accuse à son tour d'avoir contaminé l'Amérique précolumbienne par sa seule présence, avant même d'en conquérir les terres" (238). Moreover, he notes that in action, character development and religious outlook, Faulkner and Dostoevsky share a common world: "Faulkner et Dostoïévski fondent en un bloc homogène le comportement, les sentiments et morale. Chez eux, les appétits de l'instinct, les inclinations du cœur se voient toujours estimés en fonction des valeurs innées que sont le bien et le mal. Mais envisager l'existence sous l'angle de l'éthique, remodeler la matière est un phénomène qui court les rues" (32).

the landscape and to both the creative and destructive dimensions in nature.¹⁵

Bakhtin's insights into the novel follow in the wake of Ivanov to the extent that both critics see the diverse possibilities in the novel. In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin situates Dostoevsky's nonconformity within the mainstream European model. In his novels, attention is paid less to specific character types, Bakhtin notes, than to a plurality of characters and voices:

A plurality of independent voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoyevsky's novels. What unfolds in his his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of

¹⁵Carl Kerényi in his *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life* sees Dionysos as the God representing *zoë*, the life that does not die, unlike *bios*, the finite life. As Kerényi states, "*Bios* carries the ring of 'characterized life.' Correspondingly, *bios* is in Greek the original word for 'biography'" (xxxii). This detail is significant, given that Lukács sees the inner form of the novel as biographical. The rise of biography and autobiography stands in tandem with Lukács's tragic-ironic novel. *Zoë*, on the other hand, stands for "not-characterized life," an "indescribable" experience. But there are analogues for *zoë*, Kerényi says: "Elements that in everyday speech, related to everyday events and needs, stand side by side and are often intermingled, are transposed to a pure time--festive time--and a pure place: the scene of events that are enacted not in the dimension of space, but in a dimension of their own, an amplification of man, in which divine epiphanies are expected and striven for" (xxxvii). The significance of this for the American novel will be seen later in "The Bear" section of *Go Down, Moses*, which is an extended exploration of the force of "indestructible life." Lewis Hyde in his *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* elaborates on the *bios/zoë* distinction and sees *zoë* as the creative spirit of a community. Life that is creative and artistic, and not just a part of the gene pool, participates in *zoë*.

consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (Bakhtin, *Problems* 6)

In his rendering of "reality," Bakhtin contends, Dostoevsky creates a new novelistic technique. Dostoevsky brings together a variety of contending voices which gives rise to a new way of looking at the world that is intrinsically novelistic. And even where there is one main character, that figure is not a typical bourgeois as Lukács would have, but is as likely to be a criminal, a monk, or some version of the "underground man," with whom the reader would not automatically have an attachment. In this way, Dostoevsky would seem to break down the mimetic affinity of character which permeates the mainstream European model. In his Preface to *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky warns the reader that his hero is "odd, even eccentric." But the hero's oddness is meant to convey a deeper action, and, in its fashion, is more representative of the concerns of the age than the typical character would be:

For not only is an eccentric "not always" a particularity and a separate element, but, on the contrary, it happens sometimes that such a person, I dare say, carries with himself the very heart of the whole, and the rest of the men of his epoch have for some reason been temporarily torn from it, as if by a gust of wind. (Dostoevsky xvii)

For Lukács, the bourgeois, *l'homme moyen sensuel*, carries the "heart of the whole." But in a time of chaos and upheaval, it could be countered that the anomalous elements in the system carry the greatest cultural signification.

Donald Fanger's *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, a standard in Russo-American criticism, argues that the commonly accepted standard of realism is altered in its Russian incarnation. Indeed, Fanger's view of romanticism, in general, is that it is, quoting Harry Levin, a "mythopoeic revival," insofar as its realism is layered over with romanticism. The common reality, therefore, is given an imaginative rendering in Balzac, Gogol, and Dickens: "The result, in the broadest terms, is a principled deformation of reality: its familiar contours are presented to us, but in a new manipulated light" (Fanger 15). This deformation of reality is analogous to what Viktor Shklovsky calls "defamiliarization" a central device that the novel uses to re-envision everyday objects in a poietic light.

Through the encounter of buried impulses and desires in the human psyche, rendered through the delineation of character, Fanger contends, Dostoevsky is connected to romantic realism:

What Dostoevsky does...[is to make] the individual personality the repository of mystery....The result, to readers accustomed by modern psychology and modern events to think of human beings in terms of their contradictions and unconscious impulses, appears more lifelike, more "realistic," than older, more conventional depictions. But at the same time its tendency is to destroy the notion of character altogether. (264)

If not destroyed, the notion of character after the Russian novel, and the American as well, is certainly foreshortened. In these two bodies of writing, the Russian and the American, there is an increasing realm of mystery to the characters'

motivations and actions. No longer are characters sought to be "well-rounded" as E.M. Forster prescribes in *Aspects of the Novel*; rather they may seem like mythic figures, known only in action and effect.

Marshall McLuhan in a valuable but often overlooked essay, "The Southern Quality," contrasts the delineation of character in industrial societies with that in agrarian cultures. "A 'business civilization'" he writes, "with its elaborate subterfuges and legal fictions, produces equally intricate and subtly aimless characters. Such a society requires endless action and hence motivation of its members. And character is strictly constituted by motive" (188). Character "types" are the product of a more refined, more effete society, one distant from its roots. In agrarian societies, particularly in Russia and America which both have close connections to the earth, characters are closer to the soil and as a result, would seem to be closer to Aristotle's concept of character as *agent* of the action. It is the mythic action that forms character in Melville, Hawthorne, Faulkner, Gogol, and Dostoevsky. In the modern psychological novel, in contrast, the motivation of the character is the vanguard of the action. The modern world's distrust of the passionate life forced men and women of passion to express themselves in eccentric and grotesque forms. This "freakishness" is as evident in Faulkner as it is in Dostoevsky, in Flannery O'Connor as it is in the Brontës.

But the dominant way to view these characters from the Lukács model is through the lens of Southern Gothic.

Passionate characters are unsubtle, McLuhan says, and constitute the dominant personae in the Southern canon: "The primarily non-introspective and passionate character of Southern life speaks from every product of Southern writers" (189). Flannery O'Connor, that master of the American eccentric and grotesque, says that the grotesque character is not just a comic character type, a version of frontier humor. Instead, grotesque characters always function as a reproach to the reader:

In nineteenth-century American writing, there was a good deal of grotesque literature which came from the frontier and was supposed to be funny; but our present grotesque characters, comic though they may be, are at least not primarily so. They seem to carry an invisible burden; their fanaticism is a reproach, not merely an eccentricity. I believe that they come about from the prophetic vision peculiar to any novelist whose concerns I have been describing. In the novelist's case, prophecy is a matter of seeing near things with their extensions of meaning and thus of seeing far things close up. The prophet is a realist of distances, and it is this kind of realism that you find in the best modern instances of the grotesque. (O'Connor 44)

In this light, one could say that Faulkner's prophetic vision stems from his being a "realist of distances." He resists the normal range of perceptions and renders reality either close-up, as in the grotesque portrayal, or far away, seeing the implications of the character "figured" over the temporal and spatial landscape. By seeing extensions and resonances in character, Faulkner requires the reader to stretch out temporality, seeing characters rippled through with figural

representations, and filtered through with broader patterns of action. Ike Snopes in *The Hamlet*, for instance, is not simply perverse in his love for a cow, but when viewed from sufficient distance, a courtly lover.

This conception of character follows as a derivative of the Romantic eccentric. Bakhtin maintains that "eccentricity is a special category of the carnival sense of the world, organically connected with the category of familiar contact; it permits--in concretely sensuous form--the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 123). The eccentric, the marginal, the excluded all have a privileged viewpoint on the world which, though largely ignored in the mainstream, alternate traditions seize upon.

One of the most pregnant of Bakhtin's insights is the concept of carnivalization. In the menippean economy of excess, the novel takes on a Protean quality, capable of absorbing and manifesting a variety of styles and genres. In the Menippea, Bakhtin discovers "a striking combination of what would seem to be absolutely heterogenous and incompatible elements: philosophical dialogue, adventure and fantasticality, slum naturalism, utopia and so forth" (*Problems* 134). Bakhtin views the carnival impulse as a persistent cultural stratum which Christianity itself has acknowledged in its own writings and rituals:

As in the menippea, rulers, rich men, thieves, beggars, heterae, come together here on equal terms on a single fundamentally dialogized plane. Here,

as in the menippea, considerable importance is given to dream visions, insanity, obsessions of all sorts. And finally, Christian narrative literature also absorbed into itself kindred genres: the symposium (the gospel meals) and the soliloquy.

Christian narrative literature (independently of the influence of the carnivalized menippea) was also subject to direct carnivalization....But carnivalization is even more powerfully present in apocryphal Christian literature....

These are the ancient sources, the "origins" (the "archaic portion") of that generic tradition, one of whose high peaks was to be the works of Dostoevsky. These "origins" are preserved, in a renewed form, in his work. (Bakhtin, *Problems* 135)

In this passage, Bakhtin sees the atavistic quality, the "archaic portion," at work in Dostoevsky's novels, as Russian literature relates, in its own way, an apocryphal version of reality.

At the heart of the carnival motif is a critique of the existing order and the formation of an alternative community. By means of carnivalization, human relations are reconstituted on a different plane; through carnival action, the world is regenerated; in this seemingly chaotic ritual, the creative aspect of the individual is foregrounded as literature moves away from representation and toward poiesis and renewal.

A recurring point of emphasis for Bakhtin is the creative capacities of otherness, the creative potential of the dialogical mode of consciousness, and the openness to surprise and the unexpected. For Bakhtin, the world is "unfinalized"; the last word has not been spoken: "Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, and the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been

spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 166). In these sentiments, Bakhtin, echoing Dostoevsky, anticipates Faulkner. In his "Address to the Graduating Class" at Pine Manor Junior College Faulkner states,

What's wrong with this world is, it's not finished yet. It is not completed to that point where man can put his final signature to the job and say, "It is finished. We made it and it works."

Because only man can complete it. Not God, but man. It is man's high destiny and proof of his immortality too, that his is the choice between ending the world, effacing it from the long annal of time and space, and completing it. (Faulkner, *Essays* 135)

The only way to finish the world is through poiesis, the act of human making. Both in art and in action, human poiesis participates in the activity of "completing the world." Yet, in the novel, the world is not a sealed-off unity; it is finally "unfinalizable" and open, as it holds out the mythopoeic image as an object to be sought, but never fully attained.

IV. The New World Model of the Novel: From *Mimesis* to *Poiesis*

i. New Turns in Novel Criticism

In a certain sense, I believe in the future of "the literature of the fantastic." For the moment at least, the classical realistic or the psychological novel is no longer interesting: first of all, it no longer interests the younger generations. But the *nouvelle vague* cannot last either....We will thus rediscover the epic quality, the narration that the *nouvelle vague* abolished. We will read fascinating, true stories, without their reflecting, for all that, immediate reality, the concrete of contemporary history and its eschatological messages. We will finally rediscover the mythical element, the symbolical element, the rites which have nourished all civilizations. Certainly they will not be recognized as such under their camouflage. It will be a new mythology.

(Eliade, *No Souvenirs* 278-279)

The quest for a new mythology, which Eliade foresees, following the earlier prophets of the novel, Novalis and Schlegel, is now realized in the contemporary "New World" novel. This is part of a larger movement away from a mimetic model, and towards a poietic model of the novel, based not on representation but the creative engagement with other facets of reality.¹ This emphasis on the poietic, on the making of

¹Jacques Maritain in *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* has noted that the transition from non-being into being is attended by *poiesis*. He quotes Plato in the *Symposium*: "'You know,' [Plato] wrote in the *Symposium*, 'that the word *poièsis* means many things: for every activity causing a passage from non-being into being is *poièsis*, so that the works produced by any kind of art are *poièsis*, and the workmen who achieve them are all *poiètai*, or makers. You know, nevertheless, that they are not called *poiètai*, poets, rather they have other names; and only that portion of the whole *poièsis* (in the general sense of art) which is separated from the rest and is concerned with music (*mousikè*) and melodic measures,

a culture, is the common thread running through the Romantic novel and the Biblical motifs; its heart is the reimagining of a people through the efficacy of creative action.

This reordering of history and culture is parallel to Hayden White's analysis and categorization of nineteenth-century historiography in terms of genre. The ordering of time, a task usually reserved for myth, was superseded by the ascendancy of the philosophy of history in the nineteenth century. As Faulkner critic John Sykes remarks in a gloss on White's *Metahistory*, "In White's view the construction of an historical account from the raw data of the historical field is always an act of *poiesis* rather than *mimesis*, and thus, in the deepest sense of the term, it is a kind of myth" (8-9). The position of the novel at the present time is analogous to the poietic element in accounting for history; through *mimesis* the novel renders and unmaskes one history, and through *poiesis* the novel points forward and advocates an alternate version of reality.

The double function of unmasking and recreating in the novel is noted by Edouard Glissant in *Caribbean Discourse*:

Let us take the literary work's widest impact; we can agree that it serves two functions: the first is that of demythification, of desecration, of intellectual analysis, whose purpose is to dismantle the internal mechanism of a given system, to expose the hidden workings, to demystify. It also has a hallowing purpose in reuniting a community around its myths, its beliefs, its imagination, or its ideology. (99-100)

is called poetry, and those who share in its possession are called poets'" (88-89).

The "hallowing" function of the literary has long been overlooked, wary as we have become of such terms. Nonetheless, the validation and sacralization of a community's history and myths, as they are contained in its deepest apprehension of a right order of things, will tend to surface to expression.

This shift from mimesis to poiesis was most recently remarked by Carlos Fuentes. Literature generally, and the novel in particular, proposes a reality no less real than history itself; it not merely records, but insistently "announces a new world." Literature, he continues, "is a countertime and a second reading of the historical" (Fuentes, "Latin" 11). In abandoning the vicissitudes of the historical, the novel creates a new reality out of a catastrophic past, and gives voice to what had previously been unspoken. In assessing the task of the novel, Fuentes notes:

[Novels] give verbal reality to the unwritten part of the world, which will always be far greater than the written part....For by saying, the novel makes visible the invisible part of reality, and it does so in a way unforeseen by the realist or psychological canons of the past. ("Latin" 5)

Fuentes summarizes succinctly the turn in the novel which this study all too laboriously develops. The novel recovers a hidden aspect of reality, a reality not just of repression, the uncanny, or any of the manifold levels of the psyche that have been brought to light in the novels of Proust, James, and Woolf. The novel moves away from an individual present

and past, to an as yet unwritten though common past. Fuentes continues,

In the fulsome manner described by Bakhtin, the contemporary novelist uses fiction as an arena where not only characters meet, but also languages, codes of behavior, distant historical areas, and multiple genres, breaking down artificial barriers and constantly enlarging the territory of the human presence in history. (5)

Fuentes seems to be asserting that the novel undertakes the task of inclusion and the making of a "open" unity of the multiple discourses of the world. The novel creates a place for all humanity in its diversity, marking the terrain of representation as an ecumenical space "constantly enlarging the territory of the human presence," thereby making all space "simultaneous." Fuentes continues to observe that this process of inclusion is marked by the combined effect of mimesis and poiesis:

Through this process, the novel not only reflects reality, but in effect creates a new reality, one capable of admitting new desires, social behaviors, and moral demands that might go unheeded if not touched by the knowledge of the literary imagination. (5-6)

In recuperating the past, it saves the temporal and the historical from the archive, the dead repository of memory. Similarly, it flattens out time, bringing both past and future into the ambit of the present.

And so, the novel creates a new time for its readers: the past is saved from becoming a museum, or the future an unattainable ideological promise. The novel makes of the past, memory, and of the future, desire. Both happen today, in the present of the reader who, by reading, remembers and desires. William Faulkner said it better than anyone: "All is present, you understand? Today

will not end until tomorrow and tomorrow began 10,000 years ago." (6)

Fuentes enunciates the hope and promise of the novel; it carves a "line of flight," to borrow a phrase from Gilles Deleuze, out of a false past and ever-receding future and seeks to avoid both nostalgia and utopia--the dominant nodes where the past and the future were parked in the modern world.

Time and history are seen less as part of a process of evolution and progress, than as a coextensive network of multiple histories and relations. As the older evolutionary model is set against the new relational form--what Glissant calls the "Poetics of the Relation"--culture is reformed as a dialogical enterprise. This turn to dialogism is the heart of Bakhtin's contribution to the novel, a turn which was anticipated in earlier criticism by R.W.B. Lewis.

In *The American Adam*, Lewis sees the American terrain in a complementary configuration to the form of the novel.

Lewis observes of American literature and culture:

I want first to suggest an analogy between the history of a culture--or of its thought and literature--and the unfolding course of a dialogue; a dialogue more or less philosophic in nature and, like Plato's, containing a number of voices. Every culture seems, as it advances toward maturity, to produce its own determining debate over the ideas that preoccupy it: salvation, the order of nature, money, power, sex, the machine and the like. The debate, indeed, may be said to be the culture, at least on its loftiest levels; for a culture achieves identity not so much through the ascendancy of one particular set of convictions as through the emergence of its peculiar and distinctive dialogue. (Lewis 1-2)

Where Lewis sees dialogue as a "determining debate" about major ideas and themes, Bakhtin's concept would seem less antagonistic and more open-ended and provisional in its assertions.

On the other end of the dialogic spectrum stands José David Saldivar who in "The Dialectics of Our America" has remarked in a gloss on Sacvan Bercovitch that

Bercovitch's own history of American literature resembles Bakhtin's description of the novelistic form: it is often marked by a clashing plurality of discourses, fragments, and a polyethnic system of American codes in what he sees as our age of "dissensus" (Saldivar 62).²

Saldivar's gloss on Bakhtin seems stronger on centrifugal tendencies in dialogism than Bakhtin himself would grant. While Bakhtin posits contending discourses, he returns repeatedly of some type of "common-unity"--an at least provisional unity of language and commonality of purpose embodied in the novel--wherein all voices can be contained. But to understand the book of America, states Saldivar, one of the great fictions of modernity must be surrendered: the fiction of a common language and a common culture.

But if we assert that the dream of a common culture was just that--a dream--it has been one of the most persistent American illusions. The destiny of America as defined in its literature--especially in Melville and Faulkner--has been the constant striving for a common bond among all peoples--not

²For a discussion of Bakhtin's theory of culture, see Maria Shevtsova, "Dialogism in the Novel and Bakhtin's Theory of Culture."

one where there is any automatically dominant ethnic group, but one where, in a multiplicity of voices, a high culture marked by generosity can be shared by all. Richard Slotkin has remarked on this aspect in his redefinition of the American myth. A new myth must be marked by "kindness," he says,

not as the charity of the privileged to the disadvantaged, but as an enlarged sense of mortal kinship--the kindness invoked by Melville in *Moby Dick* when Ishmael, weary of Ahab's apocalyptic quest, imagines the fatal divisions amont [sic] people dissolved "into the very milk and sperm of kindness" (*Gunfighter* 657-658).

Fuentes and other writers insist that only in the image of poiesis can this vision of the American destiny be found, through which a tribal order can be overcome and an ecumenical consciousness be hoped for.

This new "ecumenism" in the novel has its analogue in critical discourse in Edward Said's advocacy of a standard of "worldliness" to evaluate literature from diverse contexts. This standard disconnects works from their specific and local situations--in other words, from "area studies"--and reconnects them into larger world of literature and creative expression: "By linking works to each other we bring them out of the neglect and secondariness to which for all kinds of political and ideological reasons they had been previously condemned" (Said, "Politics" 28). In rejecting both separatism and exclusivism, Said advocates treating works as literature to be interpreted in the broadest possible

context. To do otherwise, he says, is to regard works of literature

only as informative ethnographic specimens, suitable only for the limited attention of experts and area specialists. *Worldliness* is therefore the restoration of such works and their place in the global setting, a restoration that can only be accomplished by an appreciation not of some tiny, defensively constituted corner of the world, but of the large, many-windowed house of human culture as a whole. ("Politics" 28).

Said seems to assert something similar to Fuentes: that the inclusion of other literatures both past and present, enlarges the "territory of the human presence in history."

This change in critical perspective is heightened further by Wlad Godzich and Nicholas Spadaccini's observation that, in the transition from the medieval to the modern world, literature was marked by increasing "direction" in light of institutional and national concerns. In contrast, literature in the Spanish Middle Ages, Godzich says, referred to writing which lacked a particular "addressee," unlike modern discourse which, he asserts, was designed for highly specific contexts and audiences. The medieval conception of literary production stands in sharp distinction to the modern situation, he says, where one discourse could claim mastery over another:

[In the Medieval discursive situation] there were no discourses that could claim a position of mastery over other discourses....what one had was a...complicated situation in which each discourse had to negotiate its position in relation to other discourses without having recourse to some central discourse as the dispenser of equivalences. (Godzich, *Introduction* 11)

This contrasts to a highly-directed concept of literature as it came to evolve in modernity. This observation is reinforced by González Echevarría's thesis that the novel aligns itself with certain dominant discourses in order to reinforce its truth claims. By appropriating the dominant discourse, characters in modern novels assume a compelling if unconscious rhetorical force, inducing their readers to perform by imitation a dramatization of the text. The medieval symbolic universe, in contrast, was constituted by numerous contending discourses, none of which could claim mastery. As Godzich remarks, "The medieval discursive system had to function then along lateral lines and not vertical ones" (11). But this "dialogic" encounter turns increasingly "monological" as literature is appropriated to national purposes with the ascendancy of the modern European novel.

Thus to see the frame of literature on a multi-cultural and global context--and ultimately "cosmopoieic"--is to undo some of the constraints imposed on discourse by modernization. The structure of discourse and culture is, ironically, "medievalized"; or, as Bakhtin would say, discourses and utterances become "dialogized" and "carnivalized." In this sense, literature goes beyond the limitations of its own culture and speaks to others, perhaps even more forcefully than to the specific culture from which it is produced. The best literature, of course, has always been dialogical, has always spoken with relevance beyond nationality and the political.

There seems to be emerging, therefore, an increasing consensus among some critics--Glissant, Fuentes, Godzich, Said--of the necessity, and even urgency, of leaving behind certain critical assumptions rooted in period and area studies, and in assumptions inherited from our readings of modern novels. To summarize some of the main points made thus far: (1) Glissant observes that literature reworks the past and recovers its "hallowing" function as it demystifies and desecrates; (2) Fuentes sees a new type of novel in the making, one with both poietic and mimetic basis; (3) Following Godzich, one could say that the current shift in the novel releases the novel from directed discourses, and attains the capacity to speak, perhaps even more poignantly, to readers and peoples that are distant in space and time; (4) Said counters the tendency to read novels according to period and area, advocating indirectly, through his standard of "worldliness," a genre approach to literary study, and, by extension, observing the tremendous possibilities in the novel at the present time.

Thus we can say that after a period in which the novel seemed to be exhausted, a new and vital literature is emerging, not in the traditional loci of literary production, but in what has come to be termed the "third-world novel."³

³The terminology for the phenomenon of the contemporary novel at present is fluid and inexact. Kutzinski uses the term "New World," Godzich "Emergent," others "Third-World." Milan Kundera in an interview with Lois Oppenheim unexpectedly uses the word "European" to describe the counter-tradition: "It really bothers me not to find the right term [for the novel]. If I say "Western novel" it will

This is a vague and inexact term since, in reality, it encompasses a wide variety of literatures: the Latin-American novel, the post-colonial novels of Africa and the East, the Caribbean novel, the Eastern-European novel, even the African-American novel, and other "marginal" literatures. More appropriate, perhaps, is Wlad Godzich's term, "Emergent Literature." The consensus among the various terms is that this new form of the novel is unlike the traditional "well-formed novel" in the European Modernist tradition. In his essay "What is the Modern Third World Novel?" Viney Kirpal sees in the wide variety of third-world writing a renewed attention to societal and communal concerns, and not the "private, lonely, alienated person of modern Western literature" (149). As well, there is the use of "mythology, oral literary forms, [and] religious and metaphysical perceptions" (149). Notions of character formation give way to archetype, psychology to qualities of being, history and state to myth. The questions raised by the modern European novel are no longer central concerns; more important are questions raised by the interrelation of different cultural

be said that I am forgetting the Russian novel. If I say "world novel," I am concealing the fact that the novel I am speaking of is the one historically linked to Europe. That is why I say "European Novel"; but I understand this adjective in the Husserlian sense: not as a geographical one, but as a spiritual one, which takes both America and, for example, Israel. What I call the "European novel" is the history that goes from Cervantes to Faulkner" (Kundera, *Interview* 10). Clearly they all refer to slightly different phenomena, and the terminology of my own analysis will vary, depending on the point of emphasis.

orders, images, and patterns superimposed on the same terrain--questions more in the realm of anthropology, comparative mythology, and archetypal studies.

Ever since Gabriel García Márquez termed Faulkner his "Master" in his Nobel Prize address, it has become commonplace to note Faulkner's influence on Latin-American writing.⁴ Carlos Fuentes in his 1974 address to the PEN conference analyzes various novelists' relevance to the Latin-American context, and Faulkner assumes paramount importance:

But *Absalom, Absalom!*, *Light in August*, or *The Sound and the Fury* could, in their mythic essence, have been told by a wise savage in central Africa, an ancient guardian of memory in the Himalayas, an amnesiac demon, or a remorseful god. Yet it was from the Deep South of the same central, optimistic, success-nurtured, pragmatic culture that emerged these Compsons and Sartorises and Benjys and Burdens and Joe Christmases to bestow the gift of tragedy on an epic civilization, to undermine the Puritan legacy of the elect and the damned, by the obscure, potent certainty that there is no moral tragedy unless the struggle is between equally legitimate forces, forces that together represent a moral dilemma that can only be transcended by embracing the moral conflict with its antagonist.... Sinclair Lewis is yours, and as such, interesting and important to us. William Faulkner is both yours and ours, and as such, essential to us. (Fuentes, "Central" 119)

Fuentes, first of all, notes the atavistic leanings in Faulkner; his stories could have been told by an "ancient guardian of memory" or "an amnesiac demon." Faulkner burrows

⁴There are a number of studies which deal directly with Faulkner's "influence" on Latin American novels and novelists. See Joan Loyd Hernandez, *The Influence of William Faulkner in Four Latin American Novelists*.

up from the Deep South, modifying the American project. In that aim, Faulkner participates in a struggle that crosses national boundaries. Faulkner is not merely a Southern, American, or Western Novelist, but a world writer. Glissant and other novelists have made similar observations, particularly in the way that Faulkner evidences a form of expression common to novels of the "Other America." Faulkner is a central component of that structure:

[T]he novel of the "Other America" (the Caribbean and South America) [is opposed] to that which is fixed (by word and gesture) in the urban, industrial world of the north of the United States. I also tend to relate Faulkner's work (the furthest from northern America as far as his ideas are concerned) to this group, in defiance of reality, and I need to clarify this. Such a clarification was attempted when I spoke of the *desire for history* in literature and the tragic return, which Faulkner has in common with us. (Glissant 147)

Both Fuentes and Glissant see Faulkner as adjusting the "optimistic success-nurtured, pragmatic culture" of America with the "gift of tragedy." This gives us a basis, not only for the position of Faulkner in a pan-American context, but offers a clue to the content of his mythopoesis. When Glissant speaks of a "*desire for history*," he sees Faulkner resisting the same forces of historical oblivion that Latin-American writers have been persistently countering in their work. The novel, in bringing to light the tragedy and sufferings of a people, bestow the gift of memory.

The development of Faulkner criticism has undergone various phases: serious recognition began first in France, and only after this did he warrant notice in American

criticism, but it was not until after his Nobel Prize Address that he was recognized in the South. All of these contexts can stake a claim on Faulkner; but a smaller field of criticism has been steadily emerging from what might be termed the "outsiders"--those who, though inhabiting the margins of Western culture, are in the center of cultural change.

The perspective of the outsider is a crucial one for Bakhtin; indeed, he remarks that one can understand only by stepping outside the object of speculation:

In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding--in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others. (Bakhtin, *Speech* 7)

Bakhtin's insight offers a new opportunity of reading texts and speaks to the advantages of "intertextual" juxtapositions. Looking at a text from the outside compensates for natural interpretative "blind spots" when literary works are restricted to area, genre, or period studies.

The so-called Third World as the context of the outsider is of primary importance in this study, but not in the conventional sense of either reception or influence. Bakhtin, in discussing the sources of carnivalization, states

that it is not "influence" per se that concerns him, but the development of the genre as a whole:

We emphasize again that we are not interested in the influence of separate individual authors, individual works, individual themes, ideas, images --what interests us is precisely the *generic tradition itself* which was transmitted through the particular authors. Throughout this process the tradition is reborn and renewed in each of them in its own way, that is, in a unique and unrepeatable way. (Bakhtin, *Problems* 159)

The action of "discovery" embodied in poesis is therefore carried out, not just in the works in contemporary authors themselves, but in the manner in which criticism is contextualized and renewed. Influence merely perpetuates a mimetic and linear fallacy of literary production and authorial intent, and ignores the reality of the creative process and the way a genre transforms and reinvigorates itself.

The novels that fit Bakhtin's schema best are those arising, not in the centers of culture, not London or Paris or New York, but on the borderlands and frontiers of culture. The St. Petersburg of Dostoevsky shares a common frontier with Joyce's Dublin, Faulkner's Jefferson, and García Márquez's Macondo. It is only in these zones of cultural contact that tensions resonate and polyphonic "noise"--to borrow a term from Michel Serres--is produced. And as Milan Kundera states, it is only on the frontier that questions can arise which are unable to be expressed in the cultural center:

Latin America and Central America are in effect two border areas of the West: two parts of the world where the West (Westernness) has become problematic; two parts of the world where the survival of the West is not a theoretical question but forms the most concrete reality. (Kundera, *Afterword* 781)

On the borders, the cultural encounters and transitions are felt, and tensions and voices that engender the novel resonate.

Concurrent with this transitional state, according to Victor Turner, is the emergence of myth. Myth as the overarching frame for a diversity of "mythologems" tends to arise at a point of tension, a point of uncertainty in historical destiny. Myth understood in this sense is not merely a calling forth and appropriation of indigenous narratives--the nineteenth-century mimetic view--but a reimagining of the nature of a people, and the source of a creative power. Richard Slotkin says "Myth describes a process, credible to its audience, by which knowledge is transformed into power; it provides a scenario or prescription for action, defining and limiting the possibilities for human response in the universe" (*Regeneration* 7). An access to myth, therefore, can be an enabling force for a people where raw history may be a source of exclusion and debilitation.

Myth as it is spoken of in the contemporary novel is in sharp contrast to the notion of "history" in the European novel. The notion of history as separate from the world of literary representation is coextensive with the rise of the

European Novel. As Glissant remarks, "History is a highly functional fantasy of the West, originating at precisely the time when it alone 'made' the history of the world" (64). But myth is capable of weaving a more comprehensive view of a people, amending the historical narrative of the victor to the imagined narrative of the vanquished. Myth, therefore, not only gives a different version of events--a version from below--it addresses and relieves the weight of history, allowing the sufferings of the past to be borne. Taken as such, history becomes a form of what Wlad Godzich calls *prosopopoeia*:

The historian is the specialized wielder of a discourse who seeks to give us a figural representation of [the changing face of history]. His or her mode is that of the *prosopopoeia*, the rhetorical figure that consists in giving a face to that which does not have one. (Godzich, *Foreword* xiii).

In the concept of *prosopopoeia* the binary opposition of myth and history collapses. Godzich follows White in implicitly arguing that the terms history and myth are deconstructable into each other. There is no perception of history without a mythic "face," and no myth without the "facts" of a specific history.

Seeing the contemporary novel as reintroducing the world of myth not only alters the view of history, however. Novelistic "characters" are replaced by novelized "heroes," and anthropological questions take on greater significance than in the European novel. In short, there is the emergence of what Bakhtin called the "prosaic consciousness"--the

assertion of the significance of the everyday. Many are the ways to develop narrative and carve up reality, and, as the contemporary novel has revealed, the classical novel cut but one path.

ii. Biblical Form and Pattern in the New World Novel

The Old Testament is not an epic, or a tragedy, but the first novel, and it is as such that the English understand it, as the foundation of the novel. The traitor is the essential character of the novel, the hero. A traitor to the world of dominant significations, and to the established order.

(Deleuze, "Superiority" 41)

The shadow of the Bible has been cast over the New World since its conquest. According to Bruce Metzger, Christopher Columbus received inspiration for his journey to the Americas from a passage in II Esdras.⁵ That Columbus received inspiration from an apocryphal book of the Bible, itself a poietic gloss on a set text, gives all the more prominence to

⁵II Esdras 6:42 states: "On the third day you commanded the waters to be gathered together in a seventh part of the earth; six parts you dried up and kept so that some of them might be planted and cultivated and be of service before you." (All biblical quotation is taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Ed. Bruce E. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy.) I am indebted to Bruce Metzger in his *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* for this insight. Metzger states: "That a passage from the Apocrypha encouraged Christopher Columbus in the enterprise which resulted in his discovery of the New World, is a little known, but quite authentic fact. To be sure, the verse in the Apocrypha is an erroneous comment upon the Genesis narrative of creation, and Columbus was in error in attributing its authority to the 'prophet Ezra' of the Old testament, but--for all that--it played a notable part in pushing back the earth's horizons, both literally and figuratively" (232). Mircea Eliade in "Paradise and Utopia: Mythical Geography and Eschatology" elaborates on the messianic and apocalyptic atmosphere that permeated Columbus's "discovery" of America.

Faulkner's comment that his work undertook the process of "sublimating the actual to the apocryphal."

The apocalyptic strain in Columbus's mind is paralleled in the New England Puritans' founding of their own New Jerusalem. Biblical motifs have recurred throughout American literature, and particularly in the novel; both the desire for Eden and the Apocalyptic expectation are prominent themes.⁶ Melville, Faulkner, Morrison, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, García Márquez, Flannery O'Connor, and Zora Neale Hurston, to name but a few, have all drawn on biblical narrative as text and context, figure and ground.

But not only in theme, but also in form and pattern, has the American novel mirrored its Biblical ancestor. Gabriel Josipovici has observed that

earlier ages saw the whole book [the Bible] as essentially a romance, covering the whole of history from Creation to the Last Judgment, where the first Adam is exiled from a garden because of a serpent and the second Adam, by slaying the serpent, makes it possible for mankind to enter the garden again, but transformed now into a gleaming city. (12)

The "long human recording," as Faulkner puts it, universal history from Genesis to the Apocalypse, is reflected in *Go Down, Moses* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* most pointedly. In between, there is found every possible literary and extra-

⁶For the exploration of some Biblical themes on American literature see R.W.B. Lewis's *The American Adam* and Lewis Simpson's *The Dispossessed Garden*. Both see America in light of its Biblical roots, as does Ursula Brumm in *American Thought and Religious Typology*, who explicates Melville and Hawthorne according to a typological method.

literary genre, every narrative convention and the broadest range of passion and desire--a range as comprehensive and diverse as the Bible.

We might say, however, that it is in four major ways that the biblical narrative shares affinities with the novel: first, its comprehensiveness in structure and form; second, its stylistic backgrounding and its emphasis on the everyday; third, its figural representations of time and character; and finally, its themes of sacrifice and covenant formation. In looking at the overall structure of the Bible, therefore, one finds an analogue to recent novelistic structures. The Bible contains a wide variety of voices, points of view, and narrative styles and genres. As Richard H. Hiers states in a *Reader's Guide to the Bible*:

The Bible comprises the preserved traditions and writings of a series of communities, respecting the full range of their experiences and reflections during more than a thousand years. We find here biography and history; dirge and eulogy; sermon and parable; folk song, hymn, and love song; architectural plans; military strategy; diary; detective story; and romance; ritual and criminal law; moral admonition; prophecy and political commentary; psychological observation; genealogy; aphorism; theology of history; fragments of pagan myths; letters; tracts; and apocalyptic visions. The variety and richness of this literature may confuse readers who expect to find only "religious" material in the Bible. Nevertheless, the Bible tells one story; the story of God, creation, humankind, and God's special people. (21)

Seen in this light, the Bible is less a religious text than a creative--and subversive--subtext. It is not a mere refuge and consolation from the insecurities and defects of the world, but is a record of what Herbert Schneidau calls

"Sacred Discontent." It has a range and capacity for carrying the full human experience, where no aspect is untouched by meaning and significance. Of course the question still remains of how we retain a sense of the Bible as a whole, given what Josipovici calls its "peculiarly fragmentary and elliptical mode of narration" (23).

On the level of style, Erich Auerbach in his study of literary representation, *Mimesis*, has noted the contrasting styles between biblical and Homeric narrative. Where action is "foregrounded" in Greek narratives, the biblical is "fraught with background." Auerbach elaborates:

On the one hand, externalized, uniformly illuminated phenomena, at a definite time and in a definite place, connected together without lacunae in a perpetual foreground; thoughts and feeling completely expressed; events taking place in liesurely fashion and with very little of suspense. On the other hand, the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else is left in obscurity; the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is non-existent; time and place are undefined and call for interpretation; thoughts and feeling remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and fragmentary speeches; the whole, permeated with the most unrelieved suspense and directed toward a single goal (and to that extent far more of a unity), remains mysterious and "fraught with background." (*Mimesis* 11-12)

Auerbach continues to analyze the action of Abraham in the *akedah*, the binding of Isaac; to understand Abraham, he maintains, one cannot merely look to his present action, or to his character, but one must look at his previous history, his own backgrounded text. "[H]is silent obedience is multilayered, has background" (15). Auerbach elaborates by

noting that the narrative strategy in Genesis is not oriented towards "realism," but truth: "The world of the Scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be a historically true reality--it insists that it is the only real world, is destined for autocracy" (14-15). Sacred narrative itself creates the standard of what is most real and most relevant in history.

Further, in the Old Testament, there is no separation of styles, as had occurred in later narrative development. The elevated and the common are mixed together; the sublime and tragic is commingled with the domestic and commonplace. According to Auerbach, "The sublime influence of God here reached so deeply into the everyday that the two realms of the sublime and everyday are not only actually unseparated but basically inseparable" (22-23). All corners of existence for the Hebrews were illuminated by divine influence. As Nathan A. Scott Jr. remarks, there was "no impulse to segregate the noumenal from the contingent and finite realities of nature and history" ("Decline" 5).

Not only in overall structure and particular style, however, but also in its general action does the Bible have relevance to the novel. The Bible marks a call of a people to transformation, to a change of heart. The passage from bondage and oppression to the freedom and liberty of the sons of God, as St. Paul terms it, is a common novelistic theme. Ishmael takes to the whaling ship, Huck Finn takes to the raft, Isaac McCaslin takes to the wilderness, all in order to

escape their own particular version of Egypt. While one order is being discarded, another is being formed; while one past is left in ruins, another is born. This pattern, at the most basic level, is the double movement of the novel, its elliptical form, so to speak, to repeat an insight of Schlegel. The twin movement of binding and loosening, of casting off and gathering up, of sacrifice and covenant-formation are analogously fundamental paradigms in both the Bible and the New World novel. These elements are among the particular discoveries of American literature, born out of its own history, attributes which could not be ascribed to the novel of bourgeois Europe. Not only does the European novel not bear the same relation to ancestral texts, its history lacks the dimension of otherness--that simultaneous promise and pitfall--which makes the new world's literary history so distinct.

The fundamental site of this binding and loosening in the Bible is the sacrifice of Isaac: the akedah. In this one action sacrifice and covenant meet. As Dudley Young has remarked,

The discussion of the law's origins in carrying, keeping, binding, cursing, and promising is nicely collected in the Hebrew akedah, the knot that binds man to god and forms the covenant from whose carried Ark the law and the prophets will exfoliate. The first of these knots comes after the flood, but the most important in Jewish thinking is the sacrifice of Isaac, a binding in which the curse becomes a promise. In Christian thought Isaac is a figure for Christ, whose sacrifice combines and confounds the promise and the curse even more disturbingly. (330)

And according to Emily Miller Budick, the akedah, where "curse becomes a promise," is the pivotal event for American literary history.

In the Old Testament, the story of the sacrifice stands between the fall and the promised land....For the American Puritans, the sacrifice of Isaac locates the transitional moment between the loss of Eden and the covenant with Israel and the saints....The moment of the akedah, then is the point at which Old Testament, New Testament, and American history begins and begins anew--or ought to begin. (Budick 37)

The akedah inhabits the middle terrain between fall and promise, past and future, realities of oppression and dreams of liberation. As Budick elaborates, "The akedian romances concern the neutral territory or bourne separating history from fiction, one history from another, biblical history from human history, and black history from white history" (79). Faulkner explores this middle terrain between the oppositions that Budick enumerates, but finds them not so much separated as irrevocably enmeshed. In America, biblical and human history are constantly overlapped, as are "black history and white history." In modifying Budick slightly, therefore, one could say that the image of the akedah defines a common destiny and terrain rather than a line of separation.

The akedah, then, defines a common cultural paradigm, an inclusive literary structure.⁷ E. Wellisch in his study of

⁷Budick places the American historical Romance between history and fiction; it renders a "double consciousness" that simultaneously presents a world that is recognizable and defamiliarized. "These processes of defamiliarization and representation do not neutralize each other. On the contrary the American historical romances insist on the reality of history and society in order to cast doubt on the mind's

the akedah says that it is not only one of the deeply meaningful episodes in the Bible, but also "seems to describe an event on which the whole Bible stands. Its inner meaning is basic to the religious development of Judaism and Christianity and also plays a dominant role in Islam" (57). The akedah takes history and transforms it from tragedy--the sacrifice of children--and makes it epic: "And by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessings for themselves" (Gen. 22:18).

In the continuing solicitations of God to the human community, beginning in the act of creation in Genesis, the akedah marks a turning point as it tests Abraham's faith and entrenches the superiority of supernatural destiny to natural generation. In its relation to American literature, Budick notes,

The akedian myth...raises questions not only about the direction of American history but about the place of self in American society. It concerns the sources of authority in America and the distribution of physical wealth and imaginative power. It concerns acknowledging and accepting one's place in history and taking responsibility for the story that tells that history. (69)

The call and promise of Abraham--and America--is condensed in the akedah. The sacrifice of Isaac, along with the Exodus narrative, provide the two fundamental actions that the

autonomy and to force the imagination to consider something outside itself" (ix). Budick discusses a wide range of texts which belong to the historical romance tradition including Brown, Hawthorne, Twain, Dreiser, James, Faulkner and Hemingway and takes *Go Down, Moses* as the "culminant akedian romance" (79).

American literary canon has persistently drawn on: sacrifice and covenant.

The biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann recently has offered a new typology of culture that is generated from his reading of the Bible. Though he speaks specifically of the Psalms, his remarks have an application to the total effect of the Bible. The Psalms are at once, he notes, a protest and an affirmation, a polemic and a proposition. As they unmask, and deconstruct, they articulate a "counter-world":

They create, evoke, suggest, and propose a network of symbols, metaphors, images, memories and hopes so that "the world," in each successive generation, is perceived, experienced, and practiced in a specific way. *The world enacted by these Psalms of recital is intergenerational, covenantally shaped, morally serious, dialogically open, and politically demanding.* (Abiding 21)

This new world stands in opposition to the prevailing notions of power and authority. To clarify his schema, Brueggemann offers some basic oppositions and terms which define the structures of power and ideology; where modernity has valued "a) writing, b) state-story, c) fact, d) control, and e) cause and effect," it has disregarded, he says, "alternatives of a) oral testimony, b) clan-story, c) miracle, d) gift, and e) slippage" (41). Once again we are given fundamentally divergent notions of power and history which are presently condensed in the contemporary novel. History, for Brueggemann, begins in an event of "abiding astonishment," to quote Buber; in "wonder," rather than "fact":

The terms "fact" and "miracle" rest uneasily in the same conversation. The two terms in practical

usage reflect different social locations and political interests. Preference for "fact" is a claim characteristically made by those with power to legitimate their own reading of reality; "miracle" most often comes to us on the attestation of those who lack social power to legitimate in conventional ways their claims, and who engage in hope and imagination which are incongruous with the realities of established power. That is, "fact" and "miracle" do not concern simply *modes of knowledge* but also the legitimating claims and assumptions that authorize alternative *modes of power*. The attraction of "fact" in our modern reconstructions of the past seems to tilt the historical process toward the established power rather than *wonder*, so that the reliable material for history is material that is allied with established power. (Brueggemann, *Abiding* 39)

To return history to wonder is to retrieve it from the structures of domination and return it, with its miraculous mythic and imaginative roots, to those "who engage in hope and imagination." By this act, the incongruous perceptions of the disenfranchised are not only seen as valid, but as authoritative, and "fact" is emptied of its raw power.

In biblical exegesis, it is the concept of *figura* that offers some relief from the hegemony of facticity. *Figura* opens up the field of history; it creates a space for imagination; it allows for novelty and change. *Figura* implies that any single event is not complete in itself but is dependent on what has gone before--and what is to come. Just as it allows for the intrusion of past and future into the present, it sets up an intertextual relation; it places one action against another. Northrop Frye observes that in explaining history, typology makes an "analogy of causality" (81). The shape of history rises from event to analogical

form where effect becomes desire, cause becomes memory. As Frye continues in his explanation of typology:

[In typology] causes are antitypes of their effects, that is, revelations of the real meaning of the existence of the effects. The backward movement reminds us of, and is not impossibly connected with, Plato's view of knowledge as anamnesis or recollection, the re-cognizing of the new as something identifiable with the old. (81)

While typology begins in the historical, it is liberated from mere history by the act of interpretation--in other words it awaits for completion in the creative act. Auerbach states,

In this way the individual earthly event is not regarded as a definitive self-sufficient reality, nor as a link in a chain of development in which single events or combinations of events perpetually give rise to new events, but viewed primarily in immediate vertical connection with a divine order which encompasses it, which on some future day will itself be concrete reality; so that the earthly event is a prophecy or figura of a part of a whole divine reality that will be enacted in the future. ("Figura" 72)

In a figural interpretation the world recedes into the background, it becomes part of the umbra, a *figura* of an occult reality.

The Bible is one of the few metatexts capable of containing the diversity of experience of the Americas and it elevates that experience to the level of destiny. History becomes the vehicle for divine promise, infusing the everyday with significance and wonder. The Bible plants a seed in time with the promise that it will bear fruit, not in the present, but in the future. Like Yahweh's promise to Abraham, "I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand

that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessings for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:17-18). If the calling of America is patterned from the story of Abraham and Isaac, the promise of America emerges as something perennially deferred to the future. This promise is mirrored in the end of history in the transformation of time as described in the Apocalyptic expectation.

There has been considerable attention given to the theme of the Apocalyptic in American literature.⁸ When a society enters into a point of decision--a time of crisis--the apocalyptic motif will, apparently, tend to surface. As Amos N. Wilder has noted, "Common to all true apocalyptic is a situation characterized by anomie, a loss of 'world,' or erosion of structures, psychic and cultural, with the consequent nakedness to Being or immediacy to the dynamics of existence" (440). At this point in history, Wilder continues, "meaning can come through only in enigmatic ciphers drawn from outside the immediate cultural heritage"

⁸The theme of the Apocalypse has been a consistent and long-standing one in American literature. Criticism spans an older more stable conception of the canon to a more recent inter-American version. See John R. May, *Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel*; Douglas Robinson, *American Apocalypses: The Image of the End of the World in American Literature*; *The Apocalyptic Vision in America: Interdisciplinary Essays on Myth and Culture*, Ed. Lois Parkinson Zamora; Lois Parkinson Zamora, *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction*.

(444). Apocalyptic in this sense implies less a sense of doom, than the expectation that a revelation will drop through the fissures of history.

The adjective apocalyptic is derived from the general term *apokalypsis* meaning to disclose or uncover (Zamora, *Introduction* 2). The apocalyptic point of view despairs of the possibility of the creation of a just political order, and uncovers a new order and saves history by destroying it. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* declares, "The prophets foretold the future that should arise out of the present, while the apocalyptists foretold the future that should break into the present" (38). This perspective, shown in poetry in the works of Blake and Yeats, now has elemented itself in the novel, and symbolizes the saving act for history which occurs, seemingly without cause, from the distant future.

The apocalyptic vision is one of finality, of consummation--and of the destruction of time and history. As Lois Parkinson Zamora has noted:

The apocalypist describes the broad strokes of history by which human beings are moved. Novelists who employ the images and narrative perspectives of apocalypse are likely, therefore, to focus less on the psychological interaction of their characters than on the complex psychological and/or cosmic forces in whose cross-currents those characters are caught. Their awareness of the historical forces conditioning and constraining individual existence suggests a dissenting perspective: Novelists who use apocalyptic elements, like the biblical apocalyptists, are often critical of present political, social, spiritual practices, and their fiction entertains the means to oppose and overcome them. They are also concerned to create

comprehensive fictions of historical order, universal dramas that moralize judgments of isolated events and individual behavior. And they will often address, in their own narrative structures, the means by which to narrate history, a question as essential to apocalypse as the nature of history itself. (*Writing* 3-4)

The apocalyptic sheds a light on history that reveals in all our achievements new and unfamiliar patterns.

An apocalyptic intervention, then, is an intervention which occurs, not from the past, but apparently from the future; not from the earth, but from the sky, and speaks to a realm beyond history and causality to which humanity has access through the image of poiesis.

V. Faulkner and the Novel in *Go Down, Moses*

i. *Go Down, Moses* and the Intersection of Novelistic Possibilities

Italo Calvino in *Six Memos for the Next Millenium* makes clear that we must hold fast to a number of possibilities in the post-industrial era if literature is to have a future. Among the qualities he enumerates are lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility, and multiplicity. As we anticipate the future path of the novel, I suggest that "multiplicity," analogous to what Dante termed the "polysemous," is the trope that the novel will take in its structural form--a form that has been anticipated in sacred narrative. Calvino states that "[k]nowledge as multiplicity is the thread that binds together the major works both of what is called modernism and of what goes by the name postmodern" (Calvino 116). Novels that illustrate this multiplicity Calvino terms "hyper-novels"; he takes as an example Georges Perec's *La vie mode d'emploi* (*Life: A User's Guide*). Calvino views this novel as the last major installment in the history of the genre. He describes it thus:

There are many reasons for [its classification as a major novelistic event]: The plan of the book, of incredible scope but at the same time solidly finished; the novelty of its rendering; the compendium of a narrative tradition and the encyclopedic summa of things known that lend substance to a particular image of the world; the feeling of "today" that is made from accumulations of the past and the vertigo of the void; the continual presence of anguish and irony together--in a word, the manner in which the pursuit of a definite structural project and the imponderable element of poetry become one and the same thing. (Calvino 121)

Calvino intimates the comprehensiveness of the epic in his "apologia for the novel," describing the novel as a vast net, a compendium capable of containing a multiplication of styles, modes of thought, and interpretative methods--what Lévi-Strauss would term *bricolage*, or what Milan Kundera, citing Broch, calls "polyhistoricism." Polyhistoricism implies the power of incorporation that a novel has compared to other genres, a "tendency to embrace other genres, to absorb philosophical and scientific knowledge" (Kundera, *Art* 64). In so doing, the novel fulfills its destiny, and becomes a "dictionary of a people's soul," as the Romantics had hoped.

All of these elements that Calvino and Kundera describe in the novel are anticipated by Faulkner in *Go Down, Moses*. Further, that the novel is able of reciting the story of the soul of a people, that it has a metaphysical dimension, was anticipated in Schlegel's and Novalis's aphorisms on the novel. In telling its story, the novel is able to bring to life the values a people share and esteem, to present questions for debate and decision, and to gather together the varied and often conflicting discourses and languages of a people as foreshadowed in Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony, heteroglossia and the significance of threshold dialogues. Wherever these elements occur, Bakhtin would hold, the content of the dialogue takes on an urgency as a range of contending voices unfolds the truth content of the narrative. The novel, in short, to paraphrase Kundera once more, is the

expression of a world that is not merely political, or moral, but "ontological" (Kundera, *Art* 14)--a record of "being." It rises to this conversation about being, not through an invocation of transcendental truths from above, however, but through the political and moral. But, at the same time, the novel sees these levels through different eyes than they--the moral and the political--see themselves.

In a sense, the novel progresses through the moral, political and ontological levels in a manner anticipated in Dante's four-fold method of interpretation which he outlines in his "Letter to Can Grande della Scala." In that letter Dante observes that a work can be read in more senses than one and these include the literal or historical level, the allegorical, the moral, and finally, the anagogical. If the novel in modernity focused on the historical (as seen through the theories of Lukács), the novel in postmodernity has a tendency to reintroduce the anagogical. Dante takes a passage from the Psalms to explicate the movement from freedom to oppression: "When Israel came out of Egypt, and the House of Jacob from a people of strange speech, Judea became his sanctification, Israel his power" (Quoted in Adams 122). This passage is strangely resonant of the movement of freedom in *Go Down, Moses*, on all of its levels. In the anagogical level, Dante asserts, is signified "the departure of the holy soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory" (Quoted in Adams 122). The anagogue is the most mystical of the four levels as it colors

the movement of history from an eschatological perspective. It is this level that Faulkner recovers in the novel as he perceives anew the movement of history in America through the eyes of Isaac McCaslin.

The way the novel draws upon the biblical form invokes exegesis as an analogue of interpretation, but the affinity with sacred narrative that *Go Down, Moses* possesses, already hinted at in its title, goes much deeper and is more complex.¹ The Bible is, in part, what gives the work its "unity" and coherence. By means of a complex figuralism among the seven "books" that comprise the novel, one passage calls up another, each action is laced and interlaced with others, random incidents are paralleled, and each utterance is populated with the intentions of others.

To say, however, that the novel resembles the Bible is not to call up a moral or pietistic reading; if we are to take Brueggemann seriously, then the Bible offers a challenge to the world, to the ossified conventions of the novel, and to the petrified structures of power. In sublimating the actual to the apocryphal, Faulkner becomes a prophet of the

¹Mary Mumbach in "The Figural Action of Sacrifice in *Go Down, Moses*," has noted the biblical affinity in the novel: "The title of the work, the names of characters, the paralleling of incidents, the eschatological outlook: Faulkner's imagination was steeped, as he himself admitted, in that best of all stories" (247). Eleanor Cook's "Reading Typologically, For Example, Faulkner," sees the use of *figura* as an organizing principle of the novel as a whole. Joseph R. Urgo in *Faulkner's Apocrypha: A Fable, Snopes, and the Spirit of Human Rebellion*, sees Faulkner as articulating a counter-story in rebellion to sacred narrative.

possibilities in the novel and the incipient cultural forms that it articulates. As prophet, Faulkner criticizes America as he affirms its mission. The term, prophet, then, is more than a generalized invocation to "poetic" quality; the prophet, as biblical scholar Abraham J. Heschel reminds us, lends a disquieting presence on the serene landscape of history. He erupts, he castigates, operating as an agent for the fissures that break through conventional life. Heschel observes, further, that the prophet reorients presumptions about the world, and makes the human relation to time discontinuous.

This perhaps, in part, explains Faulkner's unconventional narrative strategies in his novels. In *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* as well as *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner continuously displays, what Glissant calls America's "tortured sense of time" (Glissant 144). Glissant continues, "[t]he irruption into modernity, the violent departure from tradition, from literary 'continuity,' seems to me a specific feature of the American writer when he wishes to give meaning to the reality of his environment" (Glissant 146). Fragmentation in the novel, a stumbling block for many readers' understanding of *Go Down, Moses*, is less a point of style, than a manifestation of the way the soul experiences history and responds to time.² The

²For an analysis of the use of time in the novel, and its similarity to and divergence from the mimetic model see Patricia Tobin in *Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative*.

literary response to history in the fragmented, non-mimetic narrative is that it breaks with form in order to reassemble it and to make sense of the American experience. Those who have lived under colonialism, such as Glissant in Martinique, having been dominated by an essentially mimetic structure, experience history, the West's invented fantasy, as unreal. Just as America's representation of itself has always tended toward the "unreal," Glissant observes that

[a]ll mimesis presupposes that what is represented is the "only true reality." When it involves two realities of which one is destined to reproduce the other, inevitably those who are a part of the process see themselves living in a permanent state of the unreal. That is the case with us.
(Glissant 242)

The American experience, then, becomes doubly unreal: the unreality induced by mimesis, and the expansion of realism uncovered by the encounter with otherness.

Thus the seven books of *Go Down, Moses*, like seven seals that are successively opened, though disconnected in time and place, represent a unified and indigenous experience of America. This unity is premised first and foremost in its biblical form. But also through an Aristotelian poetics, a novel such as *Go Down, Moses* can assert itself as one action, one movement which through disconnection and dislocation collects and recounts the story of one people.

This subject intrinsically calls for a full treatment of all Faulkner's fiction, but it must begin with the work that presents many central themes. *Go Down, Moses* is Faulkner's most encompassing work; it is where he engages the myth of

America most fully. Yet, many critics have failed to see the richness of *Go Down, Moses*. Criticism, at least early on, has been primarily concerned with two questions: the form of the work as a whole, and the nature of the main character, Isaac McCaslin.³

³Criticism of the novel has centered around two questions: The unity of the novel, and the efficacy of the main character, Ike McCaslin. Early criticism tended to see *Go Down, Moses* as a collection of short stories, and much of the criticism treats stories in isolation. Stanley Tick in "The Unity of *Go Down Moses*" argues for reading it as a novel but discards "Pantaloon in Black." A dissenting opinion on reading *Go Down, Moses* as a novel is Marvin Klotz's "Procrustian Revision in Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*." Also John Limon "The Integration of Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*," sees the novel as fundamentally unintegrated. James Early in *The Making of Go Down, Moses* and Joanne V. Creighton in *William Faulkner's Craft of Revision: The Snopes Trilogy, "The Unvanquished," and "Go Down, Moses"* document revisions and elucidates shared themes. John T. Matthews in *The Play of Faulkner's Language* sees the novel unified by the articulation of a passing order: "The act of speaking grief which occupies all of the stories, constitutes one of the underlying features of the novel" (217). Kathleen Latimer in "Comedy as Order in *Go Down, Moses*" sees the novel's organizing principle in its genre: Comedy. "The action of a genre is the central movement which underlies all of its parts" (1). Clearly, the unity is something hidden, in the background--"sub-terranean" to quote Edouard Glissant. With subsequent developments in the novel, the question of unity now seems largely moot. Emily Miller Budick sees the novel as a "new kind of testament" which witnesses to the haphazardness of human experience and history itself. Ike McCaslin still remains a site of controversy, however, and the preponderance of criticism, along with Faulkner himself as commentator, sees him as a "failure." There are two full-length treatments of *Go Down, Moses*: Warren Beck's *Faulkner*, and Dirk Kuyk's *Threads Cable-Strong*. Among recent criticism the most notable is Philip Weinstein's *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns*. Weinstein's analysis, while different in approach from my own, complements some of my own emphases and offers considerable insight into the nature of the "minor" characters in the novel. Weinstein's study marks a shift in Faulkner criticism in that its focus is the representation of race and gender as seen through current theory.

ii. Movements and Currents in *Go Down, Moses*

Go Down, Moses traces the reluctant "movement-of-spirit" of a people from bondage to freedom. "Reluctant" insofar as the primary catalysts for the epic action--Isaac McCaslin and Mollie Beauchamp--like Moses, are unlikely and resistant epic heroes. "Bondage" in that the novel traces the reality and residues of a slave system, an enslavement, "not the mark of servitude but of bondage" (GDM 167), not only of a people but of a memory and a future. "Freedom" in that a bond is loosened and a new covenant is formed in the action, initiated by Isaac McCaslin in the commissary, and then seconded by Mollie Beauchamp in the last story, "Go Down, Moses" in her insistence on communal observance of the death of Samuel Beauchamp and the preservation of the action in the memory of the community. Freedom in the novel is defined as a service to a sacred pattern of action, initiated by miracle and preserved through memory, and is contrasted to a profane realm of bondage, engendered by "fact" and perpetuated by history. The freedom won in the novel is not a full freedom, but the same portion of liberty and possession that was available to Moses, that glimpse of a promised land that holds itself out as the perennial possibility and never as a fully realized historical experience.

The novel can be divided into three sections: the first three stories paint in mixed tones the "Egypt" of the imagination and tell of the encounter with various forms of oppression. In "Was" and "The Fire and the Hearth" the old

plantation system and its residue are destabilized and the avenues for poietic action are explored through Tomey's Turl and Mollie. "Pantaloon in Black" marks the collapse of the vernacular culture and the exhaustion of all avenues of action embodied in Rider's extended ritual of grief coupled with the dumb non-recognition of his plight by society. The first three stories taken together sketch out the world that must be overcome, the world that must be lost, and prepare the reader for Isaac McCaslin's renunciation scene in the commissary. Subsisting concurrently in the main narrative of oppression several seemingly isolated events occur that, taken together, sustain patterns of novelty, discovery, and poiesis: first, in Isaac McCaslin's unlikely birth from an unlikely mother in a chaotic world; second, in Tomey's Turl's imagination, hermetic wit, and poietic power as shown in his machinations of escape and in his deft manipulation of the card game in "Was"; third, in the creative power of Molly as she battles Lucas and the residual powers of oppression in "The Fire and the Hearth"; and fourth, in Rider, the noble and poietic "maker" who suffers a final and conclusive defeat as the latent powers of the household economy expire on Mannie's hearth.

The pattern of the novel then shifts towards recuperation in the middle section comprised by "The Old People" and "The Bear" and lays the framework for a reorganization of cultural memory. This section surveys the encounter with the dead, and at this point in the novel the

process of sorting out the memory of a people in preparation for the renewal of the culture is initiated. The primary motif in this section is "discovery": Isaac McCaslin discovers through Sam Fathers an alternate history of America and sees in the wilderness experience the numinous layer of the world. The figure of the ancestor is the carrier of the seeds of discovery: in "The Old People," the encounter with the dead begins with the ancestor and "spiritual guide," Sam Fathers, and Isaac's tutelage in the craft of the hunter and the subtleties of the "old wild life." This upward movement continues as Isaac witnesses the death of Old Ben and the record of death in the yellowed pages of the commissary ledgers, the encounter with the reverse image of the ancestral past.

In the last section of the novel, "Delta Autumn" and "Go Down, Moses," the novel proceeds from strophe to antistrophe, as the novel critiques itself and performs a second thought on what it purports to advance, and then, in the last story, overcomes the critique by moving to a provisional and open-ended cultural prescription. As Bakhtin reminds us, "[n]ovelistic discourse is always criticizing itself." (*Dialogic* 49). The effects of Isaac McCaslin's decision to renounce his inheritance and the very possibility of language to advance common purposes are cross-examined in "Delta Autumn." In the final story, the novel moves beyond critique to prescription, as the whole action of the novel moves to a higher level, ascends to "lightness" in the terms

of Calvino, in the action of Mollie Beauchamp aided by the reluctant interventions of Gavin Stevens. The last story enacts the novel's afterlife and its rising to hope in the act of epic recuperation of Mollie Beauchamp through her runic pronouncements and persistent solicitations.

Milan Kundera has told us that a novel that does not make a discovery of a part of "being" is immoral. In *Go Down, Moses*, there are three primary discoveries:

(1) Poiesis. The novel recovers as much as discovers a concept of poiesis, initially as a reaction to cultural oppression, and then as a positive action of bringing a new state of affairs into being. The aspect of poiesis is central in the Exodus patterning of the novel, developed as the action from oppression to liberation, from defeat to victory. Nicolas Berdayev in his study of the meaning of creativity echoes this aspect of the creative act:

The creative act is always liberation and conquest. It is an experience of power. The revelation of this creative act is not a cry of pain, it is neither passive suffering nor lyric effusion. Terror, pain, palsy, destruction, must be conquered by creativity. In essence, creativity is a way out, an exodus, a victory. (13)

The movement from bondage to liberation must always have its poietic basis if it is to be real and efficacious, Berdayev would assert. This aspect is demonstrated in Tomey's Turl, and subsequently in Mollie who assumes a central role in a poietic recovery. This poietic movement continues throughout the novel, successively in the encounter with the "other" in the ancestor Sam Fathers and in the image of the death of Old

Ben, and all the other numinous and "magical" influences in the middle section. These encounters enable Isaac to see the alternate form of history, a history which enmeshes the Native-American saga in the wilderness with the African-American and Women's history in the plantation ledgers. This education, with the wilderness his "college" and the old bear his "alma mater" (210) enables Isaac to engender, through a formative act like his biblical namesake, a people and family, not of blood, but of spirit. The poietic, finally, shows the impress of the spirit on history. To see history in a poietic way is what Sam Fathers gives to Isaac in his elaborate education. History, understood in this new way, can be defined as that realm of being where the higher the value, the less it marks itself with efficacy and success on the historical order. Thus, as Faulkner has noted, it is the task of the writer to enunciate those things of great significance--love and honor and pity and pride and sacrifice. These qualities are in the custody of the ancestral presences, and will, by necessity, impose themselves lightly on the surface of history as well as in the narrative of the text. This is quite the reverse of Lukács's view, which sees the highest value--history--not only as deeply embedded in the historical order, but as the constituent of consciousness itself.

(2) Atavism. The novel recounts the continuous engagement with the ancestral type and discloses the double-pronged effect of atavism. On one level, the ancestor

evinces the perennial encounter with old wounds and misdeeds that do not heal but become exacerbated over time, and which, in turn, force themselves into the present. This is first seen in Old Carothers in his violence toward Eunice and then toward his daughter, and subsequently in its reduplication in his "heir and prototype" Lucas. Lucas is an important site of the conflicting forces of atavism for he possesses a "face which was not at all a replica even in caricature of his grandfather McCaslin's but which had heired and reproduced with absolute and shocking fidelity the old ancestor's entire generation and thought" (118). At the same time, however, he is "at once the battleground and victim of the two strains,...a vessel, durable, ancestryless, nonconductive, in which the toxin and the anti stalemated one another" (104). This negative atavistic pattern is later revealed in Roth who repeats the original act of violation and abandonment in "Delta Autumn." Atavisms in this sense are "throwbacks," mimetic repetitions of the original fault in the genetic line. Similarly in the ancestral line descended from Old Ikkemotubbe, the memory of the ancestor labors under a wound in the violence perpetrated in the deep past by all sides. But then the novel also shows another ancestral line, the creative resources of the ancestor and the dead, and sees how these presences emerge to give guidance to a dislocated culture. These "new" ancestors include Isaac, "Uncle Ike" the "little grandfather" who self-consciously makes himself an atavism and an anachronism in his culture. With Isaac,

Mollie Beauchamp, "the little old negro woman with a shrunken, incredibly old face" (371), guides a culture toward ritual and ceremony, and inscribes in memory the sacrificial victim, Samuel Beauchamp. At this point in the novel, atavism attains a new gloss as the novel shows itself to be atavistic toward the future, and not just the past: Isaac and Mollie plant a seed in the culture, the fruit of which will be realized in successive generations, in part through the unwitting complicity of the community and the cooperation of the reluctant public man, Gavin Stevens.

(3) Simultaneity. Mollie discovers in her imagination the simultaneous experience of history. She knows through her clairvoyance that Samuel Beauchamp is in trouble, and when she tells his story, it is refigured over time to include the story of Joseph and Benjamin in the Genesis account of the issue of Isaac. Her vision becomes a way of seeing the unity of the novel as a whole; all events take place simultaneously in the same "metaphysical" space. The sum of the events recounted in the novel extend from 1772 when Old Carothers was born to 1942 when George and Nat's child is expected.⁴ Yet all time is simultaneous in the novel, it is "one" story as the Bible is one story--the story of a people's reluctant acceptance and tentative possession of their destiny.

⁴See Meredith Smith's "A Chronology of *Go Down, Moses*."

Each of these discoveries moves discussion away from the rather obsessive relationship that criticism has had with Isaac McCaslin and the renunciation of his inheritance, and focuses attention on the actions of other seemingly peripheral actors. But what is significant about *Go Down, Moses* and the novel generally, are the unremarked discoveries of the marginal figures, and not the renunciation that is enacted by the main "character" Isaac McCaslin. As Kundera reminds us,

But one must never forget: what is basic (with Kafka as with all great novelists) is *discovery* (of the unknown aspects of human life and of the new possibilities of the novel). *Renunciation* (of old conventions) is nothing more than a consequence--inevitable, perhaps, but secondary.

Paradox: renunciation is immediately visible; it is thus an easily perceived sign of modernity. In contrast, what is new, what constitutes a discovery, is much harder to discern.

The reader's eye is accustomed to conventions: the renunciation of the convention is thus picked out instantly. In contrast, the discovery of the new holds itself outside all conventions. The conventional spirit cannot register it....

That is why minor works which noisily assert their rejection of conventions without bringing us anything new are often preferred to works which, without proclaiming their renunciation, discover and reveal. (Kundera, *Afterword* 783)

The preponderance of discoveries in the novel occur in almost imperceptible actions and gestures; they are hidden in the unseen modes of power of Tamey's Turl in the card game, in Molly's modestly-asserted persuasion in "The Fire in the Hearth," in the fading spirit of Mannie, in the barely palpable impression on history that the spirit of the Great Buck makes in his tracks, in the obscure intuitions of the

past that Sam Fathers passes on to Isaac, in the perplexing solicitations of Mollie to Gavin Stevens.

The discoveries which I attribute to the novel are centered on Tomey's Turl, Mollie, and Sam Fathers, more than on any of the white characters, with the exception of Isaac McCaslin. Among critics, these characters are often thought to be negative stereotypes, naive and romanticized figural retreads of older tropes. In all of his works, Faulkner always holds himself open to such accusations. In light of this criticism, this study does not valorize any negative representational aspects in the character depictions of African-American, Native-American, and women figures.⁵ Yet there is another side of them, one, as Kundera says, which is more difficult to register: the extent to which they participate in discovery and revelation and spur the movement of the novel toward freedom. All of the "marginal" characters underpin this movement, and are, in the Aristotelian sense, agents of the action.

To realize the form of the novel requires an exercise of spirit and imagination. Only if one brings to the novel an Aristotelian concept of form and structure and a biblical sense of patterning can the "unity" of the whole be gleaned. The novel proceeds through a series of recognitions, not

⁵For a discussion of these questions see Thadious Davis, *Faulkner's "Negro": Art and the Southern Context*, Dorothy L. Denniston, "Faulkner's Image of Blacks in *Go Down, Moses*," and Philip Weinstein, *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns*.

through a consistent mimesis: there is no unity of place, no unity of time, none of those reassuring aspects of the classical novel. The novel in each of its progressions explores, through its "movement-of-spirit," a different aspect of being, and discovers a new part of reality, and of the possibilities of action that might be contained in it.

iii. Inversion and Displacement in "Was"

Go Down, Moses begins under the aegis of lineal displacement, and, moreover, in biblical fashion, with an implicit genealogy as the reader is told that Isaac McCaslin is "uncle to half a county and father to no one" (3). From the outset the novel announces its participation in a different sense of time and inheritance, and foreshadows the larger shifts that the novel subsequently develops. This runic announcement of lineage, then, marks a generic mutation in the inherited conventions of the novel. As Benedict Anderson remarks:

Nothing better shows the immersion of the novel in homogenous, empty, time than the absence of those prefatory genealogies, often ascending to the origin of man, which are so characteristic a feature of ancient chronicles, legends, and holy books. (26fn)

Hence, *Go Down, Moses* breaks with the patterns of the classical novel and recovers something of the power of the holy book. The genealogy makes the past present as a simultaneous experience as Isaac McCaslin, now "Uncle Ike," the "little grandfather" announces his ancestral power in a story which is set sixteen years before his birth.

But in this case, the genealogy operates in a novel way; as it echoes a continuity with the past, it makes a break with it. Isaac McCaslin in his relationship defined as "uncle to half a county and father to no one" marks a form of recusancy, but not a mere denial; it is simultaneously a creative act in that the disavowal of paternity allows for familial reorganization and cultural novelty; it allows for Isaac to fulfill his destiny, following his biblical forebear, and be both the ancestor to a people and the child of the promise.

The preamble signals the movement of the novel as a whole. The displacement of the old plantation culture begins a series of convulsions, initiated in "Was" and continued throughout the novel, manifested in ruptures of history, lineage, and form. These displacements are marked by irony, moving away from a negative nostalgia-inducing irony to a more positive irony which initiates action from unlikely sources.⁶ Relations are not determined from father to son, or through linearity, but through consanguinous disavowal and displacement.

Robert Nisbet in his essay, "Genealogy, Growth, and Other Metaphors," elaborates on the significance of the genealogical motif:

⁶James Early in *The Making of Go Down*, Moses notes that the story was originally called "Almost." The story exhibits a system which ensures its continued existence by ironic non-contact; but while the system remains tense and unstable, in its instability it gives the hope for change.

The point is, genealogy as a metaphor settles before they even arise, all the troubling questions of causation and responsibility that might otherwise plague us in a time of hardship. Causal ascription is built into the framework of genealogy, no matter how diffident or modest any particular historian may be about pretending to final causes....All other problems of causality are really trivial once one has made the gigantic assumption that chronological succession is also genetic succession. (354)

Genealogy as a metaphor focuses the powers of mimeticism and novelty; as a cause-and-effect system, genealogy contains a vision of history and family coterminating in the desire for a dynastic reassurance.⁷ Thus Isaac's profession of being an "Uncle," rather than "Father," is a central motif in manifesting his break with history, with the dynastic impulse in the family, and in reconstituting relations on the level of the *oikos*, and finally, the cosmos. Nisbet advocates "abandon[ing] worship at the altar of cumulative continuity that has, above anything...made difficult the useful understanding of past and present" (362). This cumulative continuity is part of the mimetic desire in the novel, signified in the desire of the parent to replicate in the child, an impulse which leads to the troubling implications of the dynastic succession, a subject to which Faulkner repeatedly turns in his early work.

⁷It is significant to note that "Was" is set in 1859, the same year as the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. The evolutionary model, and an analogous historical pattern, seems therefore to come under critique. Faulkner implicitly seems to say that Darwin and the model of history and evolution which he sets forth is a part of the past, a part of "Was."

This opening passage, therefore, shows both an appropriation and deformation of the biblical text. The fundamental break that the sacrifice of Isaac implies is reproduced in the opening preamble. Yet, at the same time, this Isaac is not the one who will literally give birth to the nations; Isaac McCaslin can only influence posterity through his "avuncular" status. The gulf in history is then a rift in the relation between blood and spirit, an introduction of a new form of cultural kinship. *Go Down, Moses* confirms and novelizes this biblical figuration as both Isaacs arrive as manifestations of novelty, gift, and miracle. As Mircea Eliade remarks:

For Abraham, Isaac was a *gift* from the Lord, and not a direct material conception. Between God and Abraham yawned an abyss; there was a fundamental break in continuity. Abraham's religious act inaugurates a new religious dimension: God reveals himself as personal, as "totally distinct" existence that ordains, bestows, demands, without any rational (i.e. general and foreseeable) justification, and for which all is possible. This new religious dimension renders "faith" possible in the Judeo-Christian sense. (Eliade, *Cosmos* 110)

The site of the canceled sacrifice of Isaac marks a passage from one type of existence, one myth, to another as historical genealogy and biological determinism, the "direct material conception," begin their process of disintegration. In citing this passage, Eliade shows the novelty of the Hebraic attitude towards history and its element of divine participation as compared to other belief systems. "The historical event becomes a theophany, in which are revealed not only Yahweh's will, but also the personal relations

between him and his people" (Eliade, *Cosmos* 110). History, then, is marked by intervention and rupture so that time brings the promise of novelty and renegotiation. One is never caught in an isolated present; all time is foreshortened as chronological succession collapses. For the Jews, history had a messianic function because its end was always in sight. "History is thus abolished...in the future" (Eliade, *Cosmos* 111-112). Similarly the past is never remote but near; experience, whenever performed, always is "soon" in fulfillment.

Walter Benjamin appropriates this sense of time--a flattened out sense of time--and contrasts it with "homogeneous" or "empty time." Whereas in empty time all times are equally distant and disconnected, in Messianic time, "past times are experienced as remembrance" and the present contains the consciousness that "every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 264). History is always seen in light of prophecy; the whole span of history is brought into shape, form, figuration, and meaning. Faulkner himself confirms and approves this condensation of time when he says that "there is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future" (Quoted in Taylor, "Horror" 82).

A similar attitude toward time and genealogy has been noted in New World narratives. Patricia Tobin credits García Márquez with truncating what she calls the "genealogical

imperative," the confusion of genetically linked descent with chronological progression. Tobin observes that in "both life and literature, a line has become legitimized--whether the family line, the time line, or the story line--because our causal understanding, the main part of knowledge, is conditioned by our life experience of genealogical descent and destiny" (Tobin, "García" 53). Tobin continues to see the genealogical expectation as paralleling a novelistic expectation. Tobin quotes from Ortega y Gasset on the novel:

If we examine our ordinary notion of reality, perhaps we shall find that we do not consider real what actually happens, but a certain manner of happening that is familiar to us. In this vague sense, the real is not so much seen as foreseen; not so much what we see as what we know. If a series of events takes an unforeseen turn, we say that it seems incredible. (Quoted in "García" 53)

The break that is made in this instance is both unfamiliar and defamiliarizing. As Isaac removes himself from the world, both he and his world are made strange. What may to others appear normative is, from the point of view of estrangement, uncanny. Ike, in estranging himself from the dynastic succession--a relation which constitutes a primary subject of the European novel--places himself in another world, a "counter-world" which makes its own demands, which creates its own expectations. Further, in rejecting the realm of the fathers, with all of its securities and reassurances, he embraces an open-ended though unpredictable future and becomes, by implication, a special carrier of poiesis. Mimesis--the desire for replication of the action--

gives way to poesis as imitation gives way to novelty. This action of refusal allows for the ingression of the new and, ultimately, a different world. As Nisbet remarks in his advocacy of abandonment of genealogy and growth, it is only in this way that

we shall arrive at better ways than we now have of dealing with the *Genius*, the *Maniac*, the *Prophet*, and the *Random Event*. These, all four of them, are obviously mighty influences in history. And although none of them is beyond scholarly, imaginative, possibly even scientific understanding, none of them is likely to be understood within the framework of genealogy or growth. (Nisbet 363)

Isaac at various points in the novel roughly conforms to each of these categories which Nisbet enumerates: Isaac carries with him a certain "genius," an abiding spirit through Sam Fathers; through the renunciation of his inheritance he is regarded by others as possessing a certain "mania"; he speaks with the voice and embodies the vision of the prophet, especially in "Delta Autumn"; he is born late in life in "Was," announcing himself like a "random event."

Thus in Ike's runic preamble to his novel, the break with genealogy anticipates the break with familial and racial exclusivity. As Glissant remarks, "In Western tradition, genealogical descent guarantees racial exclusivity, just as Genesis legitimizes genealogy" (Glissant 140). Glissant sees the age of the "genealogical" epic as over, and calls for a new epic of "relation," "trace," and "creolization." With this perspective of a renewed epic consciousness, Faulkner opens *Go Down, Moses*.

The opening genealogy is repeated in the fourth section of "The Bear" when Ike discovers the ledgers; the renunciation of genealogy is then completed as he removes himself from profane history, and places himself in the discontent of a "sacred history" which, for Isaac, matures in "The Old People" and ripens in "Delta Autumn."

The complexity of begetting and bequeathing pivots between "nostalgia and horror," to borrow a phrase from Walter Taylor, as Ike's genealogy is parodied in the commissary ledgers. Seen as such, the preamble stands as a *figura* to the crux of the novel in the commissary scene--the point at which profane history comes up for decision. In fact, numerous actions and events are figuralized in the narrative: the opening genealogy prefigures the census in "Go Down, Moses"; the bear hunt of Miss Sophonsiba is placed against the hunt in the bear Old Ben; the card game is figuralized by the card game in "Pantaloon in Black" and the numbers game in "Go Down, Moses"; the horn that the boy is blowing at Warwick resonates in the horn of the hunt in "The Bear" and the horn that Ike gives to Roth's child in "Delta Autumn"; the last lines of "Was" when Uncle Buck says "Damn the fox....Go on and start breakfast. It seems to me I've been away from a whole damn month" (30) echoes Gavin Stevens at the end of "Go Down, Moses": "Come on," he said. "Lets get back to town. I haven't seen my desk in two days" (383).

In the narrative action of "Was" we are ushered into a chaotic system; as in Genesis, there must be a chaos before a new cosmos and a new mythology can be created. (Karhu 546) In this turbulence, there are a series of inversions, displacements and defamiliarizations which constitute the beginnings of a "New Mythology." Or perhaps it would be more accurate to see the world depicted as between two myths, as Bainard Cowan has noted of Melville's *Moby Dick*, with the plantation system as the janus-faced image of transition, the old myth in conflict with itself.⁸

In "Was," there is a literal displacement of Buck and Buddy, in their movement out of the plantation house, and the slaves' movement in. The narrative is given the contour of a beast fable, as the house is populated with dogs and foxes, Buck and Buddy's characterization as bees, Buck's description as "lean and active as a cat" (7), and Miss Sibbey as a bear.⁹ Animal presences and metaphors serve as the presences

⁸It is natural that the novel develop with a bifocal view since it arises, as Cowan states, "during eras of a people's rising political consciousness" (221). Cowan sees the novel's striving for a "new order" as part of its epic stratum. Cowan elaborates, "If one looked at the history of the novel, then, and as it were 'enhanced' the elements that characterize its striving for a new order--the epic elements just considered--while at the same time 'darkening' the bourgeois elements, relegating them to carriers of the new elements, one would see several prominent features....The paradox is that the novel arises in a time of the formation of national consciousness, yet its characteristic personality is not one informed by a national will to power, to one nation over all" (220-221).

⁹That "Was" calls on other genres such as the beast fable, the tall tale, and southwestern gambling stories was noted by Lewis Dabney in "'Was': Faulkner's Classic Comedy of the

of the gods in the novel. In "Was" animals serve as symbolic representations of the household gods which, "like the fox...treed behind the clock on the mantel" (5), are the outer manifestations of the lares and the penates. In "The Old People" and "The Bear" the animals like the Great Buck, the blue dog Lion, the fyce, and Old Ben, take on the role of sky gods or cosmic entities.

Characters are not known through an in-depth psychology, but take on biblical resonances through gesture and backgrounding. Buck and Buddy drag their foot as a mark of courtesy, as Faulkner defamiliarizes the desultory gesture, and Buck dons his tie. This emphasis on gestures enhances the oral content of the narrative, and engages modes of representation outside of the written word. The gestures in "Was" figure forward to the crisis in meaning in "Delta Autumn" where the empty gesture turns into the overdetermined gesture as old Uncle Ike touches Roth's unnamed mistress. As Glissant observes, "The oral..is inseparable from the movement of the body" (Glissant 122). Further, the story of Buck and Buddy is a part of an oral remembrance: "not something he [Ike] had participated in or even remembered except from the hearing, the listening" (4).

Moreover, characters become defined not by their acquisition, but by their relinquishment and dispossession.

Frontier." For an examination of the more serious subtext of "Was" see Carl L. Anderson, "Faulkner's 'Was': A Deadlier Purpose Than Simple Pleasure."

Buddy doesn't own a tie, we are told, and both Buck and Buddy have initiated the process of dispossession of the plantation system which Isaac will complete. What one has given up is significant, not what one has acquired. As the reader is told of Isaac at the outset, "[he] had owned but one object more than he could wear and carry in his pockets and his hands at one time, and this was the narrow iron cot and stained lean mattress" (3). Thus Isaac, this random event, emerges from the umbra of this chaotic system, this carnivalized world, as Bakhtin would describe it.

The site of the plantation house as it stands--unfinished--is both present and vanishing image of the political and economic structure. The plantation of Miss Sophonsiba and Mr. Hubert Beauchamp is called Warwick, we are told, "after the place in England that she said Mr. Hubert was probably the true earl of only he never even had enough pride, not to mention energy, to take the trouble to establish his just rights" (5). In Miss Sophonsiba's mind, Warwick is a model of the English country house, an American Pastoral, not the site of an oppressive social and economic system. When Buck and Buddy arrive at Warwick, a boy is

blowing a fox-horn; this is what Miss Sophonsiba was still reminding people was named Warwick even when they had already known for a long time that's what she aimed to have it called, until when they wouldn't call it Warwick she wouldn't even seem to know what they were talking about and it would sound as if she and Mr. Hubert owned two separate plantations covering the same area of ground, one on top of the other. (9)

There is the actual plantation which everybody recognizes, and then there is the invented country house, "Warwick." In Miss Sophonsiba's mind the trace of the country house takes precedence to the actual reality of the plantation system. This residual effect of the European imagination anticipates the traces that Isaac will see of the Great Buck, but in his case they are indigenous presences rather than appropriated traditions. Isaac sees one space superimposed on another in a very different way, an "authentic" or sacred way, to which Miss Sophonsiba's vision of Warwick stands as the parody or preceeding unfulfillment.

Part of the recuperative value of the novel, therefore, is the recovery of "real tradition," of real gestures rather than empty ones, of real desire and speech rather than inherited patterns of behavior. Cultural critic Eric Hobsbawm would call plantation culture, and all of the genteel rituals which surround it that Miss Sophonsiba and Buck and Buddy enact, an "invented tradition":

"Invented tradition" is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. (Hobsbawm 1)

What is under contention in the first three stories of *Go Down, Moses* is the nature of tradition. These stories make the distinction between what ought to be handed down as valuable, and what ought to be recognized as invented--and hence discardable. These stories persistently pose the

question: What is the past? What is the actual cultural memory? What is "Was"?¹⁰

Contrasted with the plantation house, abandoned, turned into a chaotic system, and renounced by Buck and Buddy as an empty cultural symbol, is the life of the household, a center of sustained value and a simultaneous carrier of the new and the ancient. Tomey's Turl, the slave who escapes as if by ritual to see Tennie at the Beauchamp plantation, is a figure of the courtly lover, the man of desire whose wooing of Tennie is thwarted at every turn. Contrasted to the household economy is the world of the plantation where romance, marriage, and women generally are to be avoided; one is considered artful in dodging the "trap" of the "bear," Miss Sophonsiba.

Tomey's Turl possesses what W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* calls a "double consciousness"; this epistemological dimension gives Tomey's Turl an added faculty of creativity and power, though not of a conventional kind. The knowledge contained in the "double consciousness" endows

¹⁰Richard M. Morse in *New World Soundings: Culture and Ideology in the Americas* has noted that the nature of the past is a primary issue and site of contention in the literature of the Americas: "Events of recent decades indicate a return to fundamentals. This period has allowed us to see more clearly what survives from 'tradition' as a usable past. It has demonstrated the promise and limits of rationalization, whether in Anglo-Empiricist, Weberian, or Marxist versions. It has led us to take seriously the indeterminacy principle embraced by the 'marvellous realists' of Latin American fiction. Most of all, it has initiated rediscovery of the people as the foundation of the polity" (5).

the mind with a capacity for entertaining conflicting cultural forces, observes Du Bois:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world,--a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (3)

Tomey's Turl as carrier of the "double consciousness" gains a privileged perspective on the world; his "second sight" allows him to be an outsider, a Hermetic figure, a communication sensor, an innocent newcomer to the action. Ivan Illich in *Gender* makes a relevant comment: "Only the newcomer perceives culture. For the insider there are men and women and then a third reality: outsiders who might be foreigners, slaves, domestic animals, untouchables, or freaks" (70). Surrounding the plantation house are the "newcomers," those who are set to subsume the old ways into a new myth of culture. Tomey's Turl, therefore, has the ground of perceptions in the story since only he is capable of negotiating with wit and imagination the boundary between plantations, between the white world and the slave, between the commodity and the "gift" economy.¹¹

¹¹Walter Taylor in "Horror and Nostalgia: The Double Perspective of Faulkner's 'Was'" hits on this double motif in

On the political level, Tomey's Turl manifests a "power of the powerless," to use Vaclav Havel's phrase, that emerges out of dissent. Both Tomey's Turl and Miss Sophonsiba possess this unacknowledged power, and through it invisibly orchestrate the whole action of the hunt. Tomey's Turl says that he must keep Buck from catching him until he "gets the word" (13), and presumably the word comes from Miss Sophonsiba though its source is never explicitly mentioned. Tomey's Turl then tells Cass:

I gonter tell you something to remember: anytime you wants to git something done, from hoeing out a crop to getting married, Just get the womenfolks to working at it. Then all you needs to do is to set down and wait. You member that. (13)

Turl is acknowledging an alternate power, a sexual power rooted in women.¹² This power works "from below," and is itself a form of poiesis. Tomey's Turl, Uncle Buck's half-brother, controls the card game and with the complicity of Mr. Hubert and his brothers, manipulates the action so that Uncle Buck and Buddy have to buy Tennie. By the end of the card game, the only person who has what he wants is Tomey's Turl. Buck, in managing to get two things he doesn't really want--Miss Sophonsiba and Tennie--pinpoints the contradictory

"Was" as he characterizes both the folksy humor--and the abject horror--of the plantation system.

¹²For an examination of the unconventional modes of power in the novel, see David W. Robinson and Caren J. Town's "'Who Dealt These Cards?': The Excluded Narrators of *Go Down, Moses*." Robinson and Town observe that "Faulkner's novel records a shift of power away from those who officially hold it toward those traditionally excluded, as political and economic control is superseded by narrative control" (193).

impulses of possession and dispossession which are to fully manifest themselves in the son, Isaac.

Michel de Certeau sees in this practice of inversion the power contained in an antidisciplinary system that he calls "culture." The activity of "poaching in countless ways on the property of others" (xii) is a poiesis according to de Certeau, and has been one of the modes of power of the dispossessed. In the image of the thief and the Hermetic figure this form of power has been a long-standing novelistic trope. This poietic power of Tomey's Turl is complemented and framed in the last story, "Go Down, Moses," when Samuel Beauchamp, Tomey's Turl's great-grandson, exercises a power of theft in "poaching" on Roth's commissary. de Certeau continues:

The weak must continually turn to their own ends
forces alien to them....

Many everyday practices...are tactical in character. And so are, more generally, many "ways of operating": victories of the "weak" over the "strong"...clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, "hunter's cunning," maneuvers, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike. The Greeks called these "ways of operating" *metis*. (xix-xx)

It would have been, perhaps, more apt for de Certeau to invoke the Hebrews rather than the Greeks in his analysis since so many of the power maneuvers in the Old Testament overturn conventional modes of power, privileging a power that works from below and is based on creativity and love--and gender--rather than on knowledge and brute force.

The theme of power is an added unifying element in the first three stories: they are all an exploration of the stirrings of the chthonic forces from below: powers rooted in sex, marriage, and the earth. These powers are all contained through elaborate rituals and forms of gaming until they break down in the uncontained grief of Rider in "Pantaloone in Black." These rituals, in turn, become transformed in the middle section in the complex "pageant rite" of the hunt.

The consistent recourse to the "ritual and ceremonial" aspect throughout the novel, therefore, becomes the way in which power is manifested and distributed. This power is placed in the hands of the marginal characters--in Tomey's Turl, Molly, and Sam Fathers--and is a way of connecting a power present by nature to one revealed by miracle. Rudolph Otto classifies this power rooted in sexual power as a complement to the numinous dimension of reality:

The "numinous" infuses the rational from above, "the sexual" presses up from beneath, quite wholesomely and normally out of the nature which the human being shares with the general animal world, into the higher world of the specifically "humane." (Otto 46)

But where the powers from below, the powers rooted in archetype and contained in myth, are explored in the first three stories, in the subsequent stories of the middle section the power base shifts and the powers come from above, from the numinous stratum of the world and the relatively asexual world of the hunt. Only in the last story, in the presence of Mollie do these two powers coalesce in a new form

rooted in simultaneity, propagated by women, manifested through ritual, and memorialized through print.

The play motif in "Was," then, particularly the inscrutable card game, is part of a larger network and figuration of play and numbers in the novel. Part of the movement of the novel is the transformation of play and numbers from motifs of gaming to objects of ritual and mystery. In "Was" play is a way of creatively engaging and circumventing an oppressive structure. But at the same time numbers and gaming are associated with possession, wealth and the lucre of the world as in Lucas's treasure hunt in "The Fire and the Hearth." The number systems fluctuate between symbols of oppression, the spectral attraction of the world, and sacred and runic presences in the narrative. As John MacQueen states, "alphabetic and numerical symbolism tended to be closely related and to involve the supernatural or the metaphysical" (9). Numbers, gaming and ritual therefore, constitute part of American literature's hieroglyphic structure.

But while the resort to gaming can offer a temporary respite to a bind, it is ultimately insufficient. The card game can produce good effect, though only by cleverness and by aleatory interventions. The chance event occurs in "Was" in that people can come together sufficiently to produce an Isaac. Like the arrival of the biblical Isaac, this is something of a miracle, as is the marriage of Tomey's Turl and Tennie. But the exhaustion of the miraculous manifests

itself ultimately in the uncanny--as in "Pantaloon in Black" --and when it does, the whole order must be reconstituted.

**iv. The Crisis of Vernacular Gender in
"The Fire and the Hearth"**

"The Fire and the Hearth," as the title suggests, is an examination of the *oikos* and the economic and social relations that undergird the familial and household economy. The story continues to follow the implications of the pruning of the family tree conducted by Isaac McCaslin, of the dual descent through both the "distaff," the line through Cass, Zack, and Roth, and the Black Beauchamp line through Tomey's Turl, Lucas, and Henry.

Set primarily in 1941, the story propels the action of the novel forward to uncover the residues of the past, and traces the arduous path toward real freedom for the Beauchamp line. Lucas, the patriarch, is more like Old Carothers than anyone, the reader is told, as he continues the pattern of violation in his own way.¹³ When he hides the still in the Indian mounds, the earth gives way and strikes him squarely in the face, "a blow not vicious, so much as merely heavy handed, a sort of final admonitory pat from the spirit of darkness and solitude, the old earth, and perhaps the old ancestors themselves" (38). Throughout the story, Lucas contends with the ancestor--the ancestor in himself, and the ancestor which Molly wants him to assume. Lucas therefore is

¹³For a developed examination of the negative aspects of Lucas's character see Sandra D. Milloy, "Faulkner's Lucas: An 'Arrogant, Intractable and Insolent' Old Man."

a troubling picture of the temptations of mimesis and modernity, he is the self-generated man, the one who "*fathered himself*" (118); Molly, a counter-force, symbolizes a poietic power, a reminder for Lucas of his identity and place in destiny through a biblical understanding of self and history, an interpretation to which Lucas acquiesces through love of Molly at the end of the story.

As the novel as a genre, one might assert, recounts a society's encounter with industrialism, so does it unmask the modes of production which that encounter produces. The struggle between mimesis and poiesis is crystalized in the contending patterns of economic "making." In "The Fire and the Hearth," we are shown three separate economies, variously working in tandem and conflict, as a microcosm of the mechanics of the larger post-plantation southern economy. There is first of all, the "first-world economy" of the ledgers and the commissary, the dwindling economy of the plantation system of Cass, Zack, and Roth, which, while not the industrial economy *per se*, acts out many of the assumptions of industrialism and becomes its symbolic representation in the novel; then, opposed to it is the "third-world" economy of the *oikos*, the economy surrounding the stove and hearth, guarded by Nat and Molly, the economy under continuous threat in the novel, seen first in "Was" as it was invaded by Buck and Buddy, then in "The Fire and the Hearth" by both Zack and Lucas.

In addition, alongside these two economies, there is a hidden one, what Ivan Illich calls "shadow work," an economy that crops up between the main industrial economy of wage-labor and its "vernacular" opponent. This is the economy of Lucas, brought to light in his shadowy distilling business and in his relentless pursuit of the buried treasure which he thinks is hidden in the Indian mound. According to Illich, this shadow economy and its wage-labor complement constitute the two facets of the industrial mode of production. While the "shadow" economy is similar to the vernacular economy of the household in its unpaid nature, its primary feature is that it works unconsciously to buttress the main wage-labor component. As Illich remarks:

The real difference between the two kinds of unpaid activity--shadow work which complements wage labor, and subsistence work which competes with and opposes both--is consistently missed. Then, as subsistence activities become more rare, all unpaid activities assume a structure analogous to housework...

A contrary view of work prevails when a community chooses a subsistence-oriented way of life. There, the inversion of development, the replacement of consumer goods by personal action, of industrial tools by convivial tools is the goal. (Illich, *Shadow* 14)

Housework is the primary example Illich uses of shadow work, the unpaid complement to wage labor. This shadow area, then, is primarily a women's domain; this aspect is most typically illustrated in "Was" with Miss Sophonsiba safely disestablished from authority and harmlessly ensconced in the plantation house. This activity Illich calls "industrial serfdom" (*Shadow* 21) and notes that wherever wage labor

expands, this element of the economy tends to expand in tandem and crowd out other economies, particularly "vernacular" or subsistence communities where human beings can live creatively--as *homo artifex*, and not merely as *homo industrialis*. Thus Illich states,

An unsentimental history of industrial work thus removes the blindspot of economics: *homo economicus* has never been sexually neutral; from the beginning he was created as a couple, as *vir laborans*, the workingman, and *femina domestica*, the hausfrau, *homo industrialis* was made. In no society that developed toward the goal of full employment has shadow work not grown apace with that employment. And shadow work provided a device, effective beyond every precedent, to degrade a type of activity in which women cannot but predominate, while it supported one which privileged men. (*Shadow* 23)

Lucas's activity is a type of "shadow" labor as it tries to imitate the mode and effect of the industrial economy. Thus Lucas, while freed from slavery, enacts his own serfdom. In so doing, Lucas removes himself from the marriage and couples himself with *homo industrialis*. Molly realizes that Lucas has taken an alien lover, and acts upon it by asking Roth for a "voce"; she cannot give up even the limited creative existence in the vernacular economy of the hearth for a poor imitation of the industrial model which Lucas offers her.

Molly acts as the creative agent in the household, the persistent voice of poiesis, in touch with a spirit world and capable of exercising a certain clairvoyance. This is displayed in the last story, "Go Down, Moses," when "Molly," turned "Mollie" senses that something has happened to her Benjamin, "'Roth Edmonds sold my Benjamin. Sold him in Egypt.

Pharaoh got him'" (371). Similarly, when Molly goes to Roth to get a divorce, she tells Roth that the reason she wants a divorce is because she is afraid that Lucas will *find* the gold in the Indian mound; she is fearful that he is violating the earth, tampering with the powers beyond. For Molly, Lucas's primary fault is his violation of the sacred, his violation of the earth which is similarly a violation of both Molly and the economy surrounding the hearth. Lucas is doing more than carrying on a time-consuming diversion, as Roth seems to think. Molly explains to Roth,

"Because God say, 'What's rendered to My Earth, it belong to Me unto I resurrect it. And let him or her touch it, and beware.' And I'm afraid. I got to go. I got to be free of him."
(102)

Molly echoes Isaac McCaslin earlier in the narrative when he says "the earth was no man's but all men's" (3). This initial assertion of the importance of the earth is intensified later when Isaac repudiates his claim on the land, saying that mere purchase does not take a higher claim than the divine. In both Isaac and Molly's attitude towards the earth, there is an automatic biblical reflex.¹⁴

Contrasted to the clairvoyance of Molly, the shadow work of Lucas reveals itself as a type of alchemy, as the transmutation of substances in the distilling business coalesce with the pursuit of gold. The alchemical dream

¹⁴As Lev. 25:23 states: "Land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants." Here, as well as elsewhere in the Old Testament, are suggestions that the earth belongs to God.

makes the machine into a "laboratory-made homunculus," Illich notes, "and [gives the illusion] that it could do our work instead of slaves" (*Tools* 20). Lucas thus repeats past wrongs, and imitates the oppressive acts of his white ancestors. He engenders his own control and enslavement in his pursuit of a Faustian dream, the creation of a false economy, a chimera masquerading as gaming, invention, and cleverness, and ends up destroying--or threatening to destroy--the household and his marriage with Molly as well as the marriage of Nat and George Wilkins.

Illich, in his analysis of power, centers the discussion around the nature of tools. Tools, he says, must be oriented towards creativity--and, finally, conviviality--rather than control:

A convivial society should be designed to allow all its members the most autonomous action by means of tools least controlled by others. People feel joy, as opposed to mere pleasure, to the extent that their creative activities are creative; while the growth of tools beyond a certain point increases regimentation, dependence, exploitation, and impotence. (Illich, *Tools* 20)

Tools, like power, can therefore be manipulative or convivial, can be components of oppression, or can enhance *eutrapelia*, a graceful playfulness, in personal relations.¹⁵ Manipulative tools include the divining machine, "at once compact and complex and efficient looking with its bright

¹⁵This is Illich's assertion in *Tools for Conviviality* (xxv), as he makes a gloss on Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II, II, 168th Question, Art. 4 where Aquinas aligns austerity (or, in Illich's language, subsistence) with joyfulness.

cryptic dials and gleaming knobs" (130), an object that contrasts sharply with the tools that are associated with women in the story and Molly's own divinatory nature. Nat wants a stove, a new porch and a well, those means by which an integrated and meaningful life can be assembled, those "tools of conviviality," from George and Lucas. The razor, a tool turned weapon, becomes a central lever of power, and nearly the indirect cause of Lucas's demise with only the intervention of chance saving the conflict between him and Zack from becoming deadly.

The three economies meet in the conflict between Zack and Lucas over Molly's nursing Henry and Roth. When Molly is housed in the plantation house to nurse Roth, and when Lucas confronts Roth over the situation, it is only the misfiring of the gun that prevents all-out destruction for Zack, Roth, and, one would assume, Molly. The three economies can only exist harmoniously in separation; when they overlap or intrude on one another, destruction looms.

Lewis Hyde in his study of gift relations posits two economies in a fashion similar to Illich: the economy of the creative person--the "gift" economy--and the economy based on commodity transaction. "The Fire and the Hearth" neatly delineates these two economies, and as such continues the exploration of the novel as a whole as forging the transition from one myth to another; that is, from a mimetic myth to a poietic one where the mimetic desire of Lucas is transformed

into a poietic recognition of Molly, mediated, not by the text of modernity, but by the holy book.

The parallel positioning of economies is analogous in novelistic terms to what Milan Kundera calls the "bisexuality of the novel": "All great novels, all true novels, are bisexual. This is to say that they express both a feminine and a masculine vision of the world" (Kundera, *Interview* 10). Thus it is that novels record the dialogical struggle of desire and recount the varying patterns of action of gender in the world. David Mickelsen in "The Campfire and the Hearth in *Go Down, Moses*" sees this pattern as informing the novel as a whole. Throughout the novel, the domestic world of hearth and home is counterpoised with the campfire and the world of games, he observes. Where the hearth is seen as the center of life, the campfire always acts as an activity of withdrawal. Mickelsen remarks: "In *Go Down, Moses* the hearth is the locus of mutual support, respect and love, while the campfire represents forces which undermine those values--competition and separation" (312). Mickelsen notes that these two worlds come together in one of the most pivotal events of the novel: the nourishing effect of Sam Fathers on Ike in the wilderness.

And, yet, despite the transformation that is wrought in the household, there is still a tragic insufficiency in its ability to advance the political level and the movement of freedom. The household is the realm of necessity, the field of familial relations, in contrast to Isaac's encounter with

Sam Fathers in the defamiliarized wilderness, a site of cosmological freedom. Where the household can transform a memory that is personal, the wilderness uncovers the larger patterns of history. This uncovering is apocalyptic in its viewpoint, rather than domestic. Walter Cummins discusses these two contrasting modes in his essay "Inventing Memories: Apocalypitics and Domesticity." Cummins asserts that in contemporary writing the domestic mode has displaced the apocalyptic as the personal memory overshadows the cosmic desire:

If the Domesticity are engaged in inventing personal memories, the Apocalypitics are inventing cosmologies, whole myths of existence on the largest scale. They want to haunt us with the nightmares of the collective unconscious rather than move us with incidents we can treasure as uniquely ours. (Cummins 127)

Part of the movement of the novel as a whole is from the domestic to the apocalyptic, from the personal to the cosmic. This movement is crystalized in the last story where Gavin Stevens rushes out of Miss Worsham's house into the outside, "*Where there [is] air, space breath*" (380). The novel, in this instance and in others, consistently points to the insufficiencies contained in the private realm.

In "The Fire and the Hearth" the personal memory is changed as the past acquisitiveness of Lucas, with his attachment to the world of the commodity, is transformed into a discovery and richness that is embedded in the most mundane events and common objects. This transformation is revealed in the simple gift exchange between Lucas and Molly, as Lucas

gives the small sack of candy to Molly and says, "You aint got no teeth left, but you can gum it" (130). It is at this point that Lucas tells George to get rid of the divining machine. When George says that he can put it away, and take it out every now and then, Lucas retorts,

"No," Lucas said. "Get rid of it. I don't want to never see it again. Man has got three score and ten years on this earth, the Book says. He can want a heap in that time and a heap of what he can want is due to come to him, if he just starts soon enough. I done waited too long to start. That money's there...But I am near to the end of my three score years and ten, and I reckon to find that money aint for me." (131)

The change of heart that Lucas comes to is precipitated by love of Molly, and by the "Book." Lucas authorizes with Molly the Bible as the mediator of personal relations and the source of freedom and domestic harmony. Not only in the biblical subtext, but also in the highly backgrounded homely setting does the story have a biblical resonance; Lucas is like one of the "stiff-necked" Israelites who can so easily be seduced by the golden calf.¹⁶ In the first typescript of "Gold is not Always," the story from which "The Fire and the Hearth" is derived, James Early notes that Lucas has "the features of an Arab" and in final typescript he is described

¹⁶Martin Buber comments on the secret virtue of stiff-neckedness in *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*: "According to its current exterior character stiff-neckedness means a permanent passion for success and a rebellious mind. Yet hidden therein is a kind of secret virtue, which only rarely comes to light. This is the holy audacity which enables the people to do their deeds of faith as a people. Here Moses and Israel become one, and he genuinely represents his people before YHWH" (89).

with "faintly Syriac features" (10). This gives the reader a hint of the biblical provenance of Lucas, and suggests his status as patriarch.

This characterization is reinforced when Lucas, with his aloof pride and fierce independence, is compared to Old Carothers:

He's more like old Carothers than all the rest of us put together, including old Carothers. He is both heir and prototype simultaneously of all the geography and climate and biology which sired old Carothers and all the rest of us and our kind, myriad, countless faceless, even nameless now except himself who fathered himself. Intact and complete, contemptuous, as old Carothers must have been, of all blood black white yellow or red, including his own. (118)

To say that Lucas is "heir and prototype simultaneously" is to infer that Lucas is more than a character, an isolated incident, he is a figure. On one level, he is the prototypical patriarch, rigid and wilful, a figure of power; yet, he also is one who is oppressed, one who suffers greatly at the hand of Zack, who, Lucas thinks, has taken Molly as a mistress.

Lucas is in need of liberation and participates in the pattern of freedom: he is in need of a Moses, and so participates in the larger movement of the novel intimated by the title. Lucas is still living in the "House of Bondage," is still in his own Egypt of the imagination, a limitation which Molly, despite her fetters, seems to have overcome. Michael Walzer observes that in their oppression, the Israelites often admired and imitated the Egyptians,

performing a repetition of the acts by which they were enslaved. Similarly, for African-American slaves, America was not the promised land, but this selfsame Egypt. And as Walzer elaborates, "The worship of idols is undoubtedly the most important of the 'doings of the land of Egypt' that the Israelites were warned not to do" (94). Lucas's obsession with gold is his idol worship that he must renounce to gain a true liberation; Molly, despite her nursing of Roth and her straight circumstances, insists on her freedom, and is powerful enough to change Lucas who insists that he is "the man in [the] house" (121).

All three of the initial stories in *Go Down, Moses* articulate the need for liberation from slavery and its effects, all those elements that Kundera says are a part of the renunciation that a novel performs. In "Was" there is oppression itself; in both "The Fire and the Hearth" and "Pantaloone in Black" the cruel residue of oppression is what must be overcome and redressed.

v. Cultural Grief in "Pantaloone in Black"

The preponderance of criticism has tended to see "Pantaloone in Black" as the most anomalous story in *Go Down, Moses* and therefore an inessential part of the novel.¹⁷

¹⁷For a summary of the criticism which surrounds this position see Dirk Kuyk Jr., *Threads-Cable Strong: William Faulkner's Go Down, Moses*: 71-72. Kuyk argues that thematic and generic affinities to the rest of the novel give weight to integrating it into the main action. John Limon in "The Integration of *Go Down, Moses*" argues that Rider, the central character in "Pantaloone in Black," "cannot be understood" and that the novel has an enigma at its core. I would argue that the story's anomalousness makes it all the more significant.

Critics have noted that neither Rider nor Mannie are part of the McCaslin family, and there is no particular action that unites the story to the main narrative thread of the Ike McCaslin plot. Nevertheless, there are patterns and actions which connect the story to both what precedes and follows it. Rider, like Lucas Beauchamp, builds a fire in the hearth on his wedding night; later, when the home is "dispossessed," it becomes "repossessed" by the strange apparition of Mannie preparing the reader for surprise and miracle and the subsequent "numinous" events in "The Old People." In both "The Fire and the Hearth" and "Pantaloon in Black" the male characters confront the hearth, women, and the earth in some way. In a similar action to Lucas burying the still, the opening scene shows Rider battling the shovel as he buries Mannie. As a consequence, the earth seems to be at a point of rebellion as "the mound seemed to be rising of its own volition, not built up from above but thrusting visibly upward out of the earth itself" (135). The earth, women, the chthonic powers--all of the repressed creative agents and cultural archetypes--burst through their normal states of being and manifest themselves in uncanny ways. "Pantaloon in Black" enunciates the failure of the old myth, the breaking through of the archetypes and points to the necessity of creating a new myth in order to live a truly human life. In that sense, "Pantaloon in Black" is not the most anomalous story in the novel, but one of the most central. It shows the effect of cultural patterns generally, and not just the

the effect of cultural patterns generally, and not just the anguish of one particular family. *Go Down, Moses* really is not about the McCaslin Family, as Cleanth Brooks asserts; it is about America's encounter with itself--its confrontation with its own myths.

"Pantaloone in Black" most fully reveals the "nightmare of history," the pattern of catastrophe and ruin that needs redemption. The primary motif of the story is disintegration: when Rider buries Mannie the earth is strewn with ruins and "ghosts" which "resembled any other marked off without order about the barren plot by shards of pottery and broken bottles and cold brick and other objects insignificant to sight but actually of a profound meaning and fatal to touch, which no white man could have read" (135). On his way to the fateful card game, Rider passes by the pasture with "the black-and-silver yawn of the sandy ditch where he had played as a boy with empty snuff tins and rusted harness buckles and fragments of trace-chains and now and then an actual wheel" (149). History is revealed as tragic, and yet, ironically, it is the gift of tragedy and the ability to grieve that gives human action the ability to redeem the time and force circumstance into an epic pattern of renewal. As Fuentes has noted, Faulkner bestows the gift of tragedy on an epic culture.

Thematically "Pantaloone in Black" knits itself into the complex weave of genealogy and relation, not on the level of blood ties, but in probing the significance of the household,

and in investigating the central act of mourning in anticipation of the death of Samuel Beauchamp in the last story.¹⁸ The story of Rider is in dialogue with "Go Down, Moses," as the decay of one myth is paired with the germination of another. The way in which a community responds to the death of an estranged element, Rider and Samuel Beauchamp respectively, is the focal element of each mythic turn. As John T. Matthews remarks, the central action of the novel is the ritualization of grief:

"Pantaloone in Black" draws the parodic trilogy of *Go Down, Moses* to a harsh and disquieting conclusion. A crisis of grief stands at the heart of this story, as in the others: Rider desires to speak the death of Mannie, his wife, but he can find no words for his agony, just as he can neither deny her loss nor calm his memory. (238)

In the "light dry soilure of dead ashes" (140) in Mannie's hearth an old order has expired--the order centered around women and the hearth. The loss of Mannie then becomes magnified and intensified in the anguished death throes of the noble Rider.¹⁹

¹⁸Walter Benjamin in the *Origin of German Tragic Drama* would see "Pantaloone in Black" and all of *Go Down, Moses* as a *Trauerspiel*, a mourning play, in which the narrative stands "resplendent" in "ambiguity" and "multiplicity of meaning" (177). "Just as baroque teaching conceives of history as created events...allegory...is regarded as created, like holy scripture" (175). Allegory bursts forth in hieroglyphic splendor in the process of decay.

¹⁹That the story is the enactment of loss and bereavement is given weight in H. R. Stoneback's "Faulkner's Blues: Pantaloone in Black" which suggests that the name Rider is derived from a blues song "I Know You, Rider," a folksong of love and loss. Stoneback deftly relates the "anomalous" story to the unity of the novel: "Viewed in the larger context of the novel, the reading outlined here suggests that

Central to understanding the character of Rider, and the depiction of life in "Pantaloons in Black," is recognizing that it runs counter to what Walter Taylor has called Ike's "romantic" view of the Negro articulated in "The Bear."²⁰ It is precisely that Rider does not endure; he does not display a "pity and tolerance and forbearance and fidelity and love of children" (295) with unmitigated grace and charm. Rider is broken; barely articulate and numbed, he is crushed by the lot that life has meted out to him. Even though he is strong and heroic--we are told that at twenty-four he was the head of the timber gang "because the gang he headed moved a third again as much timber between sunup and sundown as any other moved" (137)--he is unable to bear the loss of a world held together by the texture of myth. Even at the card game--a card game in dialogue with the game in "Was"--where he kills Birdsong with the swoop of his razor, he acts with an elegance and beauty: "he...struck at the white man's throat not with the blade but with a sweeping blow of his fist,

the deep form, the profound and essential music of the novel which defies discursive analysis, exists in a tension between the blues and the spirituals, between the love and grief and violence of Rider and the exaltation of the full vision of *Go Down, Moses*, the song as well as the novel" (245).

²⁰Walter Taylor, in a fine but misguided essay on the story, and on Faulkner's depiction of African-American life generally "Faulkner's *Pantaloons*: The Negro Anomaly at the Heart of *Go Down, Moses*" sees the story as a failed opportunity to address the situation of Rider. Taylor remarks that too often Faulkner calls up clichés to render character portrayal and that the reader never sees the "deeper workings of Rider's mind" (439). It seems to me that the story is fraught with irony, from Rider's idiom to Faulkner's treatment of Rider's psychological state.

following through in the same motion so that not even the first jet of blood touched his hand or arm" (153-154). The figure of Rider calls up a number of heroic motifs: he is a symbol of the thwarted imagination of a people, a noble Rider with the sound of strange words, to deform Wallace Stevens's title of his famous essay, a type of a chivalric figure, a Hercules who is "snakebit," a Prince Hal who casts off his old life and changes his name from Spoot to Rider after he meets Mannie. Rider is the tragic hero who ought to be the epic hero, the one who is constantly moving, but without purpose, towards his meeting with death.

The loss of Mannie, therefore, is not merely the loss of his wife--though that is significant enough--it is the loss of his "vernacular" economy, the loss of the possibility of freedom and the site of creative capacities; Mannie's death will mean his subjection to a life at the sawmill and an afterlife in memory left in the custody of the unnamed deputy who recounts his fate.

The death of Mannie estranges Rider from all of his surroundings and he is set outside the stratum of his conventional life. The reaction of the society shows the inability to accommodate the heroic figure, the one who reponds in extremes, the character who reacts to life in eccentric patterns. When Rider feels, he feels with passion, with "his chest arching and collapsing" (141) as after the ghost of Mannie disappears; when he eats or drinks, he does so voraciously, as when he eats the peach pie his aunt made

for him, "wolfing at it, the syrupy filling smearing and trickling down his chin," (144) or else he is unable to eat at all, as when "the congealed and life-less mass [of peas] seemed to bounce on contact with his lips" (141). Rider inhabits the extremes, himself having become like an archetype, an avatar of grief and rage.

The most powerful manifestation of the breakdown of the myth is the appearance of Mannie herself in a world that has become unrecognizable and mythless, a world that cannot be read or understood. After drinking the jug for the third time Rider stands, "panting, blinking, the long cast of his solitary shadow slanting away across the hill and beyond, across the mazy infinitude of the night-bound earth," and pauses saying, "Ah just misread de sign wrong" (149). And earlier, when Rider returns to his house after burying Mannie, it is unrecognizable as his:

But when he put his hand on the gate it seemed to him suddenly that there was nothing beyond it. The house had never been his anyway, but now even the new planks and sills and shingles, the hearth and stove and bed, were all a part of the memory of somebody else, so that he stopped in the half-open gate and said aloud, as though he had gone to sleep in one place and then waked suddenly to find himself in another: "Whut's Ah doin hyar?" before he went on. (139)

Rider cannot "read" in a mythless world, a world where everything is defamiliarized; there is no form for action to have meaning, no process of mediation to contain his passionate mourning.

The message that the aunt and the uncle try in vain to give Rider, the only antidote to his "snakebit" state, is the promise of consolation contained in the Bible. Biblical figuration, the story seems to imply, is the only way that catastrophe can have meaning. Rider's Uncle Alec says to him, "De Lawd guv, and He tuck away. Put yo faith and trust in Him" (145). And further, his aunt exclaims "'On yo knees!' she cried. 'On yo knees and ax Him!'" (150). Some recourse to a biblical typology appears to be the only way to explain and contain the experience of oppression and death.

In the absence of a mythic structure, Mannie becomes an "uncanny" image of loss, the lure of an unrecognized and unsatisfied household economy, manifesting herself as at once strange and familiar. Freud notes the ambiguous meaning of the uncanny in his well-known essay "The Uncanny":

[L]inguistic usage has extended *das Heimliche* ['homely'] into its opposite, *das Unheimliche*; for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. (241)

Mannie's uncanny appearance is not a specific individual repression, however, but a larger cultural manifestation which displays itself at the moment of its passing.

The orphaned Rider, after burying Mannie, refuses to go home with his aunt who had raised him and he loses his memory: "He could not remember his parents at all" (136). After Mannie's death, the noble Rider becomes a wanderer on the face of the earth, robbed of solace and human warmth

where all forms of cultural mediation--game, wit, play, chance, ritual, hospitality--have disappeared. Rider is struck insensate as cultural forms are bereft of significance, and all communion between himself and the outside world is truncated. He is ripped apart, "snakebit," alternately pure body and pure mind, a figure of estrangement, an absolute "other," or what Julia Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves* has described as a foreigner.

The difficulties the foreigner will necessarily encounter--one mouth too many, incomprehensible speech, inappropriate behavior--wound him severely, but by flashes. They make him turn gray, imperceptibly, he becomes smooth and hard as a pebble, always ready to resume his infinite journey, farther, elsewhere. (Kristeva 6)

Rider all too neatly identifies with Kristeva's definition of the foreigner with his inability to eat and to drink, his heavily dialected speech, and his erratic behavior.²¹ He cannot stop moving, he refuses comfort, and at the end his restlessness fixes itself in a stupefied mental anguish as he cries out laughing to his captors, "'Hit look lack Ah just cant quit thinking'" (159). As he acts out his estrangement,

²¹Ivan Illich in *Shadow Work* reveals how the image of the alien, the stranger, the foreigner is a reflection of the society's self-image: "Societies mirror themselves not only in their transcendent gods, but also in the image of the alien beyond their frontiers" (17). The outsider metamorphosed in six stages in the West, he says: The barbarian changed into the pagan, the pagan into the infidel, the infidel into the wild man, the wild man into the native, and then the native metamorphosed into "underdeveloped people," the current view of the outsider. Rider thus becomes the everpresent image of the outsider, currently metamorphosed as an unruly "animal," a disciplinary problem.

he simultaneously figures himself with the all who are estranged from their once "familiar" world.

Though Isaac McCaslin's anguish is more sublimated, hidden from the narrative, he too has similar yearnings and desires as he finds himself set outside his community. But Isaac is more fortunate: he pays for the cultural pathology differently in a way of life which has prepared him for loss and withdrawal. He understands the economy of loss, because he will have had his commerce with the dead and the ancestral, a communion that Rider is unable to locate. That Mannie is associated with the spirits of the dead is clearly suggested by her name.²² One seems to have the choice of meeting the dead as friendly familiars--the lares of the household, or the ancestral presences such as exist in "The Old People," or as avenging spirits, the lemures who prey off the living.

The manifestation of the uncanny image of the past to Rider is an analogue to the uncanny image of history which Ike will be witness to in the commissary ledgers. The combination of strangeness and familiarity, of blindness and

²²David Orr in *The Roman Domestic Religion: A Study of the Roman Household Deities and their Shrines at Pompeii and Herculaneum* states that "The dead in the underworld were known by the term Di Manes. These spirits could aid their descendants if they were propitiated with sacrifices. However, under the aspect of Lemures and Larvae, they could be harmful if neglected" (17). Lewis Hyde in *The Gift* similarly remarks on the revenge of an unrecognized household god: "[I]f a man ignored his *genius*, it became a *larva* or a *lemur* when he died, a troublesome, restless spook that preys on the living" (53).

insight, induces both dread and initiative. "Pantaloon in Black" thus condenses the two strands of black life--its subterranean life--recounted in the narrative: the canniness of the male characters and the homely familiarity of the female characters. The failure and release of the ways of life of both strands coalesce in the uncanny as the collapse of male and female sources of power converge in a collective death. It recapitulates the loss of black power demonstrated in the first two stories in the wit of Tomey's Turl and Lucas, and in power that Mollie wields around the hearth. In "Pantaloon in Black," in contrast, African-American culture is disestablished as Rider's luck runs out, and Mannie is dispossessed of the *oikos*. Rider drinks too much, gambles, loses his "double consciousness," becomes transfixed, struck mad. His grief is a non-ironic, an un-canny response to the body. Irony, a poiesis of action, can forestall the hard reality of the situation, but the whole house collapses eventually. At this point, the action of the novel hits bottom and the necessity of imagining a new world presents itself with urgency.

In the end, when Rider "just can't stop thinking," he brings to light a long-standing historical repression. Up to this point, he has been largely mechanical, as his position has forced him to be. But as Hannah Arendt notes in *The Human Condition*, the household is intrinsically a limited

sphere of human activity.²³ One must make the transition from the private world to the public to gain real freedom, which includes the freedom borne through the life of the mind--the soul--as well as the body. For Rider, in his final stupefaction, the display of the impossibility of reason, of what the ancients termed the *bios theoretikos*, in the realm of the household is made grimly clear. Finally one must escape the narrow confines of the *oikos*, and proceed towards a larger incorporation into the public sphere. It is with this crisis that the first three stories end, and "The Old People" begins.

"Pantaloone in Black" ends on the most pessimistic note possible. But the lynching of Rider by Birdsong's men evidences, not the action of the whole community, but the revenge of a few. The human community is left in tatters as the hapless deputy dictates the story of the demise of Rider to his wife. For him, Rider is an animal:

"They look like a man and they walk on their hind legs like a man, and they can talk and you can understand them and you think they are understanding you, at least now and then. But when it comes to the normal human feelings and sentiments of human beings, they might just as well be a herd of wild buffaloes." (154)

²³Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* notes that the realm of the household is the realm of inequality, whereas the polis embodies the realm of equality. Freedom is only exercised in the polis, and the distinction between the private and the public, a central one for Greek thought, is largely lost in the modern world. (32-33) Arendt points out the necessity of the *oikos*, but also its insufficiency in fostering true political life.

The "negro" is seen as completely other, incomprehensible inhuman beings. At this point in the narrative, there yawns an abyss which separates the white and the black worlds. In order to repair the chasm, there must be the acknowledgement of the stranger, a repair that is accomplished in the last story, performed through an acknowledgement of sacrifice and suffering.

In Lucas and Rider we are given two types of would-be epic heroes, both of whom fail to realize their destiny, and to repair the decay of the myth. Instead, what emerges afterward is the recuperation of history, performed by ancestral figures that differ considerably from the type of "seekers" that we have witnessed in Lucas and Rider. The guardians, those who nurture the new epic movement, turn out to be more static than dynamic figures, and are not the latest installment on the progress of history, but atavistic and ancestral personae.

vi. Abandoning History in "The Old People"

In a comment to students at the University of Virginia, Faulkner said, "[When] [t]here's a case of the sorry, shabby world that don't quite please you,...you create one of your own" (*Faulkner* 59). The process of creating a world and a new myth of America begins anew in "The Old People" where Isaac begins his withdrawal from his past, and embraces, with the guidance of Sam Fathers, "the old dark man sired on both sides by savage kings" (165), a new genealogy. Sam Fathers, known as the "son of that Chickasaw chief" (170) who lives in

the black culture, complicates the whole notion of blood relationship and reconstitutes the matrix of kinship through the spiritual ties of blood. And as one past is forgotten, a new one gathers itself in the memory, with Isaac the orphan, replacing his natural father, Uncle Buck, with his spiritual father, Sam Fathers, and then with his immortal father, the Great Buck. The central discovery of "The Old People" is the coming into being of this new world manifested in a numinous apprehension of space and time.

After the narrative nadir of "Pantaloone in Black," "The Old People" begins to sever the links with the old world and its failures, and initiates an epic act of reclamation. The story begins with a new creation that evokes and recapitulates Genesis:

At first there was nothing. There was the faint, cold, steady rain, the gray and constant light of the late November dawn, with the voices of the hounds converging somewhere in it and toward them. Then Sam Fathers, standing just behind the boy as he had been standing when the boy shot his first running rabbit with his first gun and almost with the first load it ever carried, touched his shoulder and he began to shake, not with any cold. Then the buck was there. He did not come into sight; he was just there, looking not like a ghost but as if all light were condensed in him and he were the source of it, not only moving in it, but disseminating it, already running, seen first as you always see the deer, in that split second after he has already seen you, already slanting away in that first soaring bound, the antlers even in that dim light looking like a small rocking-chair balanced on his head. (163)

In "The Old People" there is a new beginning as the earth seems remade, no longer a chthonic force, but a realm made pregnant by spirit. In a sense, the treasure that Lucas

hunts for in "The Fire and the Hearth" is found in "The Old People." Throughout the novel, the mystery of the world is manifested, not only through causality and action, but through landscape. In the middle section, in particular, the earth emerges in full-blown characterization as the world is made anew. Edouard Glissant discusses the prominent function of landscape in the American novel. In the American landscape, in contrast to the European, no longer do pasture and meadow, park and hedge serve as a background to the action, but the rough and ancient shape of the world:

An immediate consequence of [the reimagining of realism] can be found in the function of landscape. The relationship with the land, one that is even more threatened because the community is alienated from the land, becomes so fundamental in this discourse that landscape in the work stops being merely decorative or supportive and emerges as a full character. Describing the landscape is not enough. The individual, the community, the land are inextricable in the process of creating history. Landscape is a character in this process. Its deepest meanings need to be understood.
(Glissant 105-106)

Thus the earth which brings forth avenging spirits in "Pantaloone in Black" now condenses itself into a new creation in the "unforgettable sense of the big woods--not a quality dangerous or particularly inimical, but profound, sentient gigantic and brooding" (175). "The Old People," therefore, draws on a mythic, panoramic landscape in contrast to the hallucinatory world of "Pantaloone in Black." The distinction made by Paul Shepard in *Man in the Landscape* is to the point:

The rise to consciousness of archetypal forms with details furnished from experience occurs in visions and dreams. Hallucinations are apparitions whose

immediate sensory stimulus is "interior" rather than environmental. Hallucinations and visions are essentially the same; one has the stigma of the induced and clinical, the taint of illusion; the other is numinous, religious and myth-forming. (39)

Nature is inscribed as a sacred sign, a presence that must be read and understood by the proper initiate, a true seer.

This new history of America begins in the apprehension of the marvelous, of the luminousness of a created thing condensed in the image of the deer. In both "Pantaloone in Black" and "The Old People" the reader is asked to accept without question a spectral reality as both stories anticipate the style and content of Magical Realism. As Glauco Cambon remarks :

In both of his stories ["Pantaloone in Black" and "The Old People"], Faulkner accepts the datum of "hallucination" without trying to qualify, i.e. "explain" it, since it is part and parcel of a dramatic development which we can summarize as the fatality of solitude for the Negro giant killed by grief, and as ritual initiation into the holiness of the earth for Ike McCaslin. (94-95)

Faulkner does not interrogate this vision of reality; he accepts it as a given. But here in "The Old People," the spectral is no longer uncanny, no longer a part of a nightmare, but a numinous layer of reality, a part of what Kundera terms, reminiscent of Novalis, an oneiric narrative. Faulkner shifts the focus away from the inefficacious and tragic fatality of solitude of Rider--a similarly noble figure as Sam Fathers, both of whom have felt keenly a mark, "not the mark of servitude, but of bondage" (167)--to the common solitary contemplation of the heart in the wilderness. The focus of the household economy is re-lit in the creative

night fires enkindled by Sam Fathers, just as the mysterious, dark complexity of the blood is externalized and lightened on the face of Isaac McCaslin in his initiation rites. These rites act as an external sign of his otherness and as a displacement of genealogical patrimony. In these rites, Sam anoints Isaac as the one to carry the burden of the creative act, the gift of fire, and the task of redeeming the curse of blood and history. Isaac McCaslin is the chosen one to make the descent into the underworld to face the challenge of understanding the strange signs that are presented to him there.

The nightmare of history is overcome by a new ordering through a descent and reemergence into a new mythology--a "descent into the underworld" to borrow a phrase from James Hillman--where dominant daylight history and memory is set aside and a new history, a rememory, can begin to be formed from the spirits of the dead. In this way, the archetypes which were bursting forth in "Pantaloons in Black" are given a new site in which to abide. Hillman in his exploration of the significance of the underworld motif discusses the underworld as the "vale of Soul-making," quoting Keats, a place where a creative act can be engendered.²⁴ Hillman elaborates,

²⁴Glissant notes in *Caribbean Discourse* that this reordering of history, this uncovering of a hidden history, was the project of a great deal of modern poetry and was foregrounded in the German Romantics: "To dig underneath, to reveal the inner workings, that is the aim of the kind of history recently called sociological, and one must admit that this was the ambition behind the attempt of modern Western poets

[Part of the mission of depth psychology] has been the resurrection of the dead, the recall of life so much forgotten and buried in each of us. It did not go far enough however. It believed that lifting personal or cultural repression of the instinctual id was its end. It opened the tomb, imagining that a mummified body would rise up; but the id as the underworld is not the instinctual body. It is the chthonic psyche. (Hillman, *Dream* 66-67)

"The Old People" begins the task of sorting out this many-peopled, richly-cast underworld, of deciphering the common "chthonic psyche"--what Ivanov called the realm of Dionysis in the Russian novel--and of acting upon it, of "translating" it into a new covenant. What the consciousness finds in this underworld economy are the ancestors, the old "pageant rites," the spirits of a forgotten people.

From the beginning of this new world, the past is seen, not a frozen category, a "mummified body," but a living presence, a return to sources, and re-sources.²⁵ The forests

who, with Rimbaud, Lautréamont, and Baudelaire, became engaged in bringing to light (after the German romantics) what was concealed *under the surface*" (74).

²⁵James Hillman remarks in the *Dream and the Underworld* that the realm of Hades, the realm of the dead as I am describing it in "The Old People," is a realm of creativity: "Pluto, especially, is important to recognize in our euphemistic references to the unconscious as the giver of wholeness, a storehouse of abundant riches, a place not of fixation and torment, but a place, if propiated rightly, that offers fertile plenty. Euphemism is a way of covering anxiety. In antiquity, Pluto ("riches") was said as a euphemistic name to cover the frightening depth of Hades. Today, the "creative" unconsciousness euphemistically conceals the processes of destruction and death in the depths of the soul" (20). Sam Fathers, the maker of Ike's soul, has looked into the depths: "He was a wild man. When he was born, all his blood on both sides, except the little white part, knew things that had been tamed out of our blood so long ago that we have not only forgotten them, we have to live together in herds to protect ourselves from our own sources" (167).

seethe, and with Sam Fathers Isaac McCaslin is tutored into the *techné* of hunting and the poiesis of history:

And as he talked about these old times and those dead and vanished men of another race from either that the boy knew, gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be old times and would become part of the boy's present, not only as if they had happened yesterday but as if they were still happening, the men who walked through them actually walking in breath and air and casting an actual shadow on the earth they had not quitted. (171)

Through Sam Fathers, Isaac is given an education into the significance of the ancient, ancestral presences and makes them not only a part of the past, but a significant element of the present. Isaac's understanding of time shifts away from linearity, and embraces instead a simultaneous perspective of the "fullness of time" which Mollie Beauchamp will continue in the last story. Faulkner continues,

And more: as if some of them had not happened yet but would occur tomorrow, until at last it would seem to the boy that he himself had not come into existence yet, that none of his race nor the other subject race which his people had brought with them into the land had come here yet; that although it had been his grandfather's and then his father's and uncle's and was now his cousin's and someday would be his own land which he and Sam hunted over, their hold upon it actually was as trivial and without reality as the now faded and archaic script in the chancery book in Jefferson which allocated it to them and that it was he, the boy who was the guest here and Sam Father's voice the mouthpiece of the host. (171)

As the past is made present, so is the future, so much so that the ancestor has not fully realized itself, then or now, but will in some time yet to come. Isaac can even dimly apprehend his own "afterlife," seeming "to the boy that he

himself had not come into existence yet," sensing a time when everything will come into its fully realized state.

Isaac at twelve years old is "defamiliarized" from the received temporal and genealogical inheritances; he is cut off from the neurotic influence of blood and family in a new prototype for the American *Bildungsroman*. In the initiation rite of the hunt, Isaac is marked with blood, and is made a real "character," a type of human hieroglyph, and made fit for a destiny that even he does not fully understand. Isaac realizes that "Sam Fathers had marked him indeed, not as a mere hunter, but with something Sam had had in his turn of vanished and forgotten people" (183). Isaac, in being marked with the ancestor, is able to realize himself as one of them, as one who will check the unmitigated progress of a success-obsessed people and witness to a point of stillness, an historical freeze-frame in the death of Old Ben and the yellowed ledger pages. As Sam affirms later on, "You'll be a hunter. You'll be a man" (176). Isaac will see most poignantly the effects of oppression, and realize the need for collective liberation as the whole action of "The Old People" prepares him for the revelation contained in the commissary ledgers.

It is in "The Old People" where that sacrifice of Isaac --his binding and unbinding--begins to take form. Just as the ram in the thicket is sacrificed in Isaac's place in the biblical narrative, the young buck, the first deer that Isaac shoots when he is twelve can be seen as a substitution for

Ike. What Ike witnesses is literally the sacrifice of a deer, but symbolically it is his own self-sacrifice which is enacted, his own elevation into a sacred narrative. Ike shakes and trembles as he feels himself being moved to another level of action and promise, the chosen begetter of a new act of generation.

This act of elevation is the heart of the meaning of sacrifice according to Georges Bataille: "Sacrifice restores to the sacred world that which servile use has degraded, rendered profane" (55). As the profane world continually acts to reduce objects to the realm of "things," the action of sacrifice, and the peculiar function of religious rites, is to take objects out of this "order of things"--this strata of reification--and put them in a "real" order relative to the divine order. Bataille continues: "Religion is this long effort and this anguished quest: It is always a matter of detaching from the *real* order, from the poverty of *things*, and of restoring the *divine* order" (57). Thus, even at this stage, Isaac begins his act of renunciation of a profane past of which the event in the commissary is the last installment. This act of sacrifice is brought to completion in the ritual of mourning that Mollie initiates for Samuel Beauchamp. She insists that his profane death at the hand of the executioner in Chicago be reinstalled as a ceremonial act participated in by the whole community. At these sites of sacrifice, therefore, patterned after the akedah, the disparate actions

of a people come together and articulate the shared suffering that accompanies the movement toward freedom.

Isaac participates in this sacrificial act in a particular African and Native-American manner, notes Lewis Dabney in his study of the Native-American influence on Faulkner. In "The Old People" a new lineage, a new ancestry is brought to light, standing pointedly in contrast to that outlined in the first story "Was." As Dabney notes:

The specificity of Faulkner's totemism, which is Indian, here establishes the hidden identity of the initiate with his god. Sam Fathers is Grandfather. One recalls that Ike's father's name is Buck, and one can make a case for the Boy's identity with the young spiked-horn buck who is killed in the great one's place. The biblical parallel supports this reading of Ike's initiation, in a sense of sacrifice that the forest may live. (*Indians* 133)

By the marking in "baptism" and the symbolic sacrifice Ike is deprofanized, and made the agent of a new creative act.

The effect of the rites of initiation, the record of the stories, the rite of the hunt, is the formation of a new version of the "self." Isaac is not just an idealist, as much of the criticism asserts, nor the integrated agent who rides on the wings of historical consciousness; he is formed in wholeness by an education in nature, the dead, the divine, in the "poiesis of history." This sense of wholeness is transmitted to him by Sam Fathers in the intricacies of the hunting ritual, and in the stories and legends of the woods, in that "best of all listening" (192). The nature of the self that coalesces in Isaac is what James Hillman calls "the interiorization of community":

If the self were defined as the interiorization of community, then the boundaries between me and another would be much less sure. I would be with myself when I'm with others....And "others" would not include just other people. because community, as I see it is something more... animistic. A psychic field. (Hillman, *World* 40)

Insofar as the the psyche is populated with "others"; it is a "dialogical" structure, as Bakhtin would say, and not a "monological" voice which knows clear boundaries between the self and world.

Isaac's formation into the rites of the hunter occurs in the successive hunts with Sam Fathers and culminates in the second part of his initiation (the first being his baptism in the blood of the deer) of seeing the spirit of the Great Buck. Isaac is about to leave when he hears the single clap of Walter Ewell's rifle and the mellow sound of the horn come over the ridge, signalling the death of the deer, when Sam Fathers stops him and makes him wait and witness to the spirit world. When Ike sees the ghost of the Great Buck, he is able to take the Great Buck into his communal self:

Then the boy saw the buck. It was coming down the ridge, as if it were walking out of the very sound of the horn which related its death. It was not running, it was walking, tremendous, unhurried, slanting and tilting its head to pass the antlers through the undergrowth, and the boy standing with Sam beside him now instead of behind him as Sam always always stood, and the gun still partly aimed and one of the hammers still cocked. (184)

Isaac moves to the side of Sam, "standing with Sam beside him now" (184) as the buck sees them and Sam salutes the dead buck's spirit, "'Oleh, Chief,' Sam said. 'Grandfather'" (184). Sam Fathers associates the deer, not with his father,

Ikkemotubbe, but his grandfather Issetibbeha, the last of the chiefs to have a relationship with the wilderness.

Ikkemotubbe was the first to bring the evils of civilization to the wilderness, the "French companion...Chevalier Soeur-Blonde de Vitry...with his foreign Aramis and the quadroon slave woman" (165-166) and the white powder which kills a puppy and Mocketubbe's eight-year-old son. Ikkemotubbe becomes the "Doom" of the tribe. When Sam acknowledges the chief of the deer--the grandfather--he gives his assent to a generic atavism--an atavism of the spirit--that Isaac is called to witness and propagate.

As the past is made present, a "usable" future is made possible. The history that Isaac is exposed to is an alternate history, a history of the ancestors and spiritual presences which Toni Morrison has invoked as central in her writing. Ike carries with him the wisdom of the ancestor, Sam Fathers, and with this tutoring in the alternate story of America, the discovery of violation in the commissary ledgers presents itself with all the more force. For Isaac, history begins in "miracle," remembering Walter Brueggemann's typology of Old Testament historical consciousness, as he witnesses the apparition of the Great Buck. Yet this most delicate of impressions on the historical order forces itself on Isaac with great force. The Great Buck is "tremendous" and all the way through his rites of initiation, Ike shakes and "trembles," recalling the akedah and the force of the

mysterium tremendum.²⁶ This event is absolutely central in Isaac's formation in that he learns that the most significant actions in history, even though barely realized, are never lost.

When Walter Ewell inspects the tracks, he performs a repetition of an old literary trope, having roots in Fenimore Cooper and captivity narratives, in the inspection of the tracks to discover the furtive and layered presences in the wilderness. In the hieroglyphic sign, Ewell discovers the track of the invisible deer, and, surprisingly, he finds it to be a larger one; the invisible presence, this act of miracle, is the dominant trace which will take precedence in Isaac's imagination. Subsequently, when Ike sees Cass, he discusses the spirit of the deer, seeing the cosmic etch on

²⁶Søren Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* in an exordium on the Akedah writes, "[Abraham] seized Isaac by the chest, threw him to the ground, and said, 'Stupid boy, do you think I am your father? I am an idolater. Do you think its God's command? No, it is my desire.' then Isaac trembled and cried out in anguish: 'God in heaven, have mercy on me, God of Abraham, have mercy on me; if I have no father on earth, then you be my father!'" (10). The words tremble and tremendous occur repeatedly in "The Old People" in reference to Isaac, the Great Buck and the wilderness. In fact Isaac has difficulty keeping still throughout the "The Old People" and "The Bear." He "began to shake, not with any cold" (163) when he first sees the deer and his trembles do not cease until he climbs into the "big deep bed" with Cass at Major de Spain's house where the reader is told "at last the shaking stopped" (186). The whole story is a hallowed tale, an encounter with otherness in a very different key from "Pantaloone in Black." Where Rider is in stupefaction, Ike is in a state of tremor. Rudolph Otto in *The Idea of the Holy* makes the distinction: "Stupor is plainly a different thing from tremor; it signifies blank wonder, an astonishment that strikes us dumb, amazement absolute" (26).

the world, "where the sky scoured and the icy stars glittered" (186).

"Think of all that has happened here, on this earth. All the blood hot and strong for living, pleasuring, that has soaked back into it....But you cant be alive forever, and you always wear out life long before you have exhausted the possibilities of living. And all that must be somewhere; all that could not have been invented and created just to be thrown away. And the earth is shallow; there is not a great deal of it before you come to the rock. And the earth dont want to just keep things, hoard them; it wants to use them again. Look at the seed, the acorns, at what happens even to carrion when you try to bury it: it refuses too, seethes and struggles too until it reaches light and air again, hunting the sun still." (186)

When Isaac observes that "the blood hot and strong for living...all must be somewhere" he realizes that there is a place where the accumulated human passions are deposited, a realm beyond history where valuable actions are not lost to time.²⁸ This foreshadows Ike's own life, his own action which comes under critique in "Delta Autumn." Ike discovers that there is a difference between what is dormant and what is dead. There are actions which in the stream of time, do not come to fruition, but then there are others which will find their afterlife, like Toni Morrison's spores of bluefern.

Sam Fathers, the blood of three races coursing in his veins, carries with him the burden of creating a new world,

²⁸This place of permanence is analogous to what Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in *The Future of Man* calls the "noosphere," a place of collective memory where human experience is amassed: "All round us, tangibly and materially, the thinking envelope of the Earth--the Noosphere--is adding to its internal fibres and tightening its network" (137).

of suffering a birth. When Sam brings Isaac and Cass out of the wilderness and then reenters it, in his "loneliness and solitude" (177), Sam follows in the same royal line of sufferers in the novel, in company with Lucas Beauchamp and Rider. On their shoulders, Isaac is metaphorically perched and he is able to gain his vision only through them. Isaac then carries with him a different burden of blood, not the tragic mark of incest or miscegenation, but the epic lineage of suffering. In this line, suffering can have a redemptive outlet in that it furthers the labor of birth of a new world. As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin states, the world is an "immense groping," ("Meaning" 25) which progresses, not through an automatic historical reflex, but through the cost of many failures and casualties. Those who take on suffering bring a luminosity and radiance to the essentially opaque and obscure realm that we call history. Faulkner testifies to this obscurity, this shut-off quality to history, and to the complex web of causes and effects which are so difficult to understand. When Sam Fathers and Isaac emerge from the wilderness, the line was "as sharp as the demarcation of a doored wall" (177). As the wilderness shows an alternate history, it magnifies the inherent obscurity of all historical relations. Beneath every layer of causality lies another until one comes to a root which still lies beyond comprehension. Sam Fathers has seen this hiddenness more deeply than any other; he is the only one privy to the unwritten history of the world through his connection with

the hermit Jobaker. We are told that Jobaker was "in a sense even more incredibly lost than Sam Fathers" and that "[n]obody knew his history at all." (178). Sam Fathers is the only one who has a link to total mystery, who "'knew things that had been tamed out of our blood so long ago that we have not only forgotten them,'" as Cass says, "'we have to live together in herds to protect ourselves from our own sources'" (167). Sam is the sufferer, the one who looks into the abyss at our own sources and traverses the bridge from the unknown to the known, an interpretive faculty which is, in turn, passed on to Isaac. Thus, history, which on first sight seems so self-evident, turns out to be on closer scrutiny disconcertingly illusive. (Guardini 81) The force of this revelation will intensify as Isaac decodes the ciphers of history in "The Bear."

vii. American Hieroglyphics in "The Bear"

"The Bear" continues the novel's rite of passage on the visionary terrain of the expedition begun in "The Old People," recounting "the yearly pageant rite of the old bear's furious immortality" (194). The story begins in expectation and moment: "There was a man and a dog too this time" (191), as Isaac, now sixteen, enters the wilderness, "the big woods, bigger and older than any recorded document" (191). The expedition into the woods is a voyage past literacy, beyond recorded history and ledgers, past document, and into monument.

But if "The Old People" was evocative of Genesis, "The Bear" begins the novel's turn toward the apocalyptic.²⁹ In moving toward the apocalyptic, a new pattern emerges for viewing history. Debra Bergoffen in "The Apocalyptic Meaning of History" sketches several of the attributes of an apocalyptic world view. Among them she enumerates: (1) That the teleology of history is moral; (2) That the evils of history are necessary preludes to the realization of the moral end of history; (3) That history is at a point of critical transformation; (4) That only a moral person has a place in the new world; (5) That human choices have no effect on the process of history *per se*, but they do affect the individual's situation in the world to come. (30) Isaac McCaslin, unlike all the other white characters in the novel, attains a view of history which is colored with an apocalyptic view. Isaac alone realizes the urgency of making the correct determination, not necessarily for an immediate benefit, but for the sake of the "communal anonymity of brotherhood" (257) as he tells Cass in the commissary.

Both Isaac and Mollie in "Go Down, Moses" share unconventional views of history in that both are able to go beyond the "chronotope" of the present and see the seeds of

²⁹The "taintless and incorruptible" Sam, Old Ben, and Lion--"two beasts"--recall the lion and the lamb of the Apocalypse as does the dreamscape and the anticipation of a cosmic reckoning. Donald Cowan in *Unbinding Prometheus* compares the dog Lion to the paradoxical effect of technology as a new ordering of poesis. (153-154) Evocative also is the apocalyptic section of Isaiah: 30, 31.

the future in the present; the present enacts, therefore, as an "unveiling" of something to come, and not just the sum of what has happened. As well, Isaac's participation in the world as it takes shape in "The Bear" is populated with apocalyptic tropes and motifs. Common in apocalyptic literature, as Robert Metzger notes, are the revelations contained in "mysterious numbers, strange beasts, and the disclosure of hitherto hidden truths through angelic visitants" (Metzger, *New Oxford v AP*). The revelation in the ledger pages, the strange beasts Lion and the bear, and the sense that Isaac has of Sam Fathers's spirit at his burial spot all substantiate the assertion of "The Bear" as an apocalyptic text. Nonetheless, the route to the future is through the past as the wilderness takes Isaac to a distant primordial epoch, the vanishing "old wild life" of which the Old Bear is avatar and progenitor.

"The true picture of the past flits by," Walter Benjamin reminds us. "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again" (*Illuminations* 255). The entire education of Ike is the preparation for seeing the image of the past flee from his vision, the image of a past which, like Old Ben, must die. He is chosen as the "the man," the unlikely lucky one, who will have the past expire before him, and will

bear witness to a "crossing of the ways."³⁰ And yet it is simultaneously a time when something new is beginning:

It seemed to him that something, he did not know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it. (226)

What happens to Ike is the happy good fortune of any artist and the basis of real creative production. It is his task to assemble an act of poiesis as a response to the images he witnesses. But to do this he must first engage in an act of interpretation of the apocalyptic symbols he encounters.

"The Bear" recounts two main events: one occurs when Ike is sixteen in the wilderness in the encounter with Old Ben;

³⁰This positive gloss on Ike's destiny and his action is by no means a consensus in the criticism. In fact, it is the central question in the novel. Most criticism asserts that Ike attempts to withdraw from the world for irresponsible motives. Those who see his act as a type of aesthetic idealism include Blanche H. Gelfant, "Faulkner and Keats: The Ideality of Art in 'The Bear'" who says that Ike gets frozen in stasis; and Arthur F. Kinney, "Faulkner and the Possibilities for Heroism" who says that Ike, though an idealist, is redeemed by the capacity to grieve. Those who take a similar position include: T.H. Adamowski, "Isaac McCaslin and the Wilderness of the Imagination," and Annette Benert, "The Four Fathers of Ike McCaslin." Foremost among those who see Ike's action as an evasion of political responsibility is Melvin E. Bradford "The Gum Tree Scene: Observations on the Structure of 'The Bear.'" Also contra Ike are Melvin Backman, "The Wilderness and the Negro in Faulkner's 'The Bear'" and Gloria R. Dussinger, "Faulkner's Ike McCaslin as Romantic Hero Manqué." Those who see Ike as a failure include John M. Muste, "The Failure of Love in *Go Down, Moses*," and Laura P. Claridge, "Isaac McCaslin's Failed Bid for Adulthood." For a positive interpretation of Isaac McCaslin see Susan V. Donaldson, "Isaac McCaslin and the Possibilities of Vision," and Louise Cowan, "'Forever Wilt Thou Love, and She Be Fair': Faulkner's Image of Virginity."

the other occurs when Isaac is twenty-one when he renounces his plantation inheritance in the commissary. In both actions, an act of interpretation is central. Isaac must first, as a hunter, know how to distinguish the hieroglyph of nature in the "crooked print" (194) of Old Ben, a technique which Isaac masters as he comes to know "the old bear's footprint better than he did his own" (210); the other image which Isaac must decipher is the hieroglyph of culture in the yellowed pages of the commissary ledgers. Isaac must come to see what is written in both runic signs; only then can he get a heading on the elliptical patterning of history, one centered on ascent and recuperation, the other movement focused on decline and fall.

The process of casting off his societal inheritance begins when Sam Fathers takes Isaac to Big Bottom when he is ten years old. He leaves behind the gun initially, and then the compass and the watch in order to be the proper initiate into the wilderness. Leaving behind the gun was not enough, we are told:

He stood for a moment--a child alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness. Then he relinquished completely to it. It was the watch and the compass. He was still tainted. (208)

Isaac's rite of passage is a voyage into sacred space, a voyage where he must leave behind the inventions of culture. He leaves Walter Benjamin's "homogeneous, empty time" and enters a new time; as he disorients himself from history, becoming society's eccentric, he reorients himself with the

cosmos. He enters the holy terrain of landscape where "[t]he territory and the sacred places...orient the individual to topography, [and] position him in the land and in the cosmos, an environmental gestalt of figure and ground" (Shepard, *Man* 37). For Isaac to reground himself in the world, he must take his direction from the old bear himself. When Isaac enters the wilderness, "older than any recorded document," he casts off the apparatus of modernity and becomes an alien, a stranger on the face of the earth.

When Isaac gives up his compass and watch, he gives a new interpretation to the frontier myth: the frontier is not a marked space; the boundary line between the civilized and the barbarian, determined by the compass and enforced by the gun, is erased.³¹ When he enters "the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness," Old Ben becomes his means of orientation as Ike is led back to his watch and his compass and a new relationship with the world. As Lewis Simpson remarks, "[h]aving thus 'released' himself from civilization and having entered with proper respect and humility into a living relationship with the wilderness, Ike has achieved a newness of life" (205). Isaac achieves this newness in

³¹Benedict Anderson notes the significance of the census, map, and museum in the formation of the nineteenth-century consciousness. In successive stages the novel erases these inventions: in the last story, "Go Down, Moses," the census-taker who quantifies Samuel Beauchamp's existence is overcome by an order of value that Mollie initiates; in "The Bear," the map, as marker of the boundaries between the known and the unknown, is erased; and the commissary, the repository and museum of plantation culture, akin in significance to González Echevarría's archive, is rejected.

sucessive steps, ending, paradoxically, in the encounter with the death of Old Ben and Sam Fathers. This experience of the "old dead time" is what he has been prepared for all his life:

It was as if the boy had already divined what his senses and intellect had not divined yet: that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another in the land where the old bear had earned a name, and through which ran not even a mortal beast but an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life which the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in a fury of abhorrence and fear like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;-- the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowed childless and absolved of mortality--old Priam reft of his old wife and outlived all his sons. (193-194)

The old bear stands like Priam tottering over a lost city, or like Beowulf, witnessing the old Anglo-Saxon world--like the world rooted in Doom, the old Indian chief Ikkemotubbe--ready to be subsumed by the onset of Christianity. Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders, in their study of the symbolism of the bear, see affinities in both *Beowulf* and "The Bear":

Sam, the chief, the father; Beowulf, the ring-giver, the leader: these are the people, each author seems to suggest, the likes of which we will see no more. Their family trees are rooted where they lie. The principal character of these two stories is a bear.

Beowulf shows that the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal was giving way to something new--perhaps it was the christianizing of England--and Faulkner recognized, in his own way, in his own time, that something was finished in America. (174)

Shepard and Sanders discuss in depth the significance of the bear as a cultural image. That a bear reigns over this lost

world is not an arbitrary sign, but one replete with meaning. In Shepherd and Sanders' analysis, the etymology of bear is variously associated with "parent," "father," "renewal," and the underworld.³² So while the bear seems on one level to be the ancient way of life that must be sacrificed to be saved in the memory, it is also the stratum of parentage, of fatherhood that, in every generation, must be slain.

The death of Old Ben at the hands of Lion, then, is the simultaneous image of death and life, where Old Ben is the old order of things whose sacrificial death raises the past to a higher plane. When Old Ben dies, with Boon and Lion together, "they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the

³²Shepard and Sanders note that the Bear figure is associated with the goddess Demeter, the goddess of the underworld, and Artemis: "Literally, Demeter means 'the grain of the bear mother'--that is, 'barley mother.'...Demeter was also a form of Gaia, 'a great goddess of the lower world,' a supreme Chthonian power of the Greek cosmos....Artemis, whose name means 'bear,' is the goddess who absorbs some of the sacred bear's ultimate qualities as the animal image itself disappears, Cheshire-cat-like, in the anthropomorphism of the classical gods. It is she who is most other and wild....For Christine Downing, Artemis represents three things: 'She who slays, she who is other, she who comes from afar.' Least of all the divinities in the greek pantheon is she at home on Olympus. 'Artemis embodies,' says Downing, 'a profound denial of the world of patriarchy, the world where some persons have power over others, the world of dominance and submission, where one can be hunter or hunted.'....She is the 'recreation (or recovery) of a world within which we live as a realm of souls, of living, meaningful-in-themselves beings.' She is not the past, but, as Hippolytus says, 'Artemis seems to beckon from the future, to call me toward who I am now to become'" (116-117). Virginia Ramey Mollenkott in *The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Imagery of God as Female* examines the image of a "savagely angry Mother Bear" as an image of God, and says that this manifestation of the Bear as divine image manifests "the need for mutuality" in our understanding of the divine. (52-53)

clinging dog, the bear, the man astride its back, working and probing the buried blade" (241). In this image, witnessed by Isaac and Tennie's Jim, the "old dead time" is crystalized in the memory, embedding the paradox of life and afterlife into the psyche of Isaac.

In the ongoing dispute about the form of *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner himself raised the ante when he remarked in one of his conferences at the University of Virginia that when "The Bear" was to be considered as short story, Part IV was omitted. "As a short story, a long short story, it [Part IV] has no part in it, but to me 'The Bear' is part of the novel, just as a chapter in the novel" (*Faulkner* 4). Implied in this remark is the fact that Part IV of "The Bear" is what makes the work a novel rather than just a collection of short stories. In the fourth section, many of the central actions of the novel converge: the dialogue with Cass is simultaneously a reevaluation of the collective past, the struggle and the anguish of the record of human suffering, "the tedious and shabby chronicle," as Cass calls it, and a series of conjectures of what the possible responses ought to be. As Cass and Isaac read the ledgers and see the record of victimization that is contained in them, Ike realizes that there is a counter saga in which we all participate, a history engrained in the memory through his education under Sam Fathers.

These two contending views of the past, one viewing the past as a saga descended through a royal line, and the other

as the record of commodification and victimage, come into dialogue as Isaac and Cass debate the plantation legacy. The argument turns into a discussion over interpretation of American history and the Bible. Isaac's language and thought is saturated in biblical typology, following Mollie in "The Fire and the Hearth," and his rationale for renouncing his inheritance does not make sense if his exegetical imagination is ignored. This exegetical imagination conforms to Walter Brueggemann's typology of the Psalms as Isaac aligns himself with oral testimony, clan story, miracle, gift, and slippage, all of which have become a part of his character under his rather "pagan" tutelage with Sam Fathers, and all of which are opposed to writing, state-story, fact, control, and cause-and-effect, which Cass tends to invoke, at least in his presuppositions. Similarly, Isaac's validation of the truths and complexities of the heart stand opposite to Cass's more logical thought patterns. As Isaac says to Cass, "If truth is one thing to me and another to you, how will we choose which is the truth? You don't need to choose. The heart already knows" (260). Isaac authorizes a different standard for judging the truth of the past and the nature of history. The painful lesson that Isaac learns in the ledgers through the discovery of Old Carothers' incest is that the greater the act of violence, the greater it imposes itself in history. This is the painful complement that Isaac learns from Sam Fathers: he realizes that the higher the good, the less it makes itself known in the political order.

This is the central lesson that Faulkner has to teach the reader about the relationship of value--the "old verities" --to history: the higher the value in question, the greater its intrinsic worth, the less self-evident it is in its realization. In the grand failure of his greatest characters, Faulkner attests to this central point about the way in which action realizes itself in the historical order as he conditions the reader to look for disappointment and suffering in the redemption of time. But while the highest goods, those things made present in the mind through the image of poiesis, are betrayed by history, all is not lost. Despair is thwarted in the knowledge and hope that there is a reserve of permanence for them, as Isaac has learned through Sam Fathers in "The Old People." He realizes then that "all could not have been invented and created just to be thrown away" (186).

Cass, a figure born "too late into the old time and too soon for the new" (297), examines the whole plantation history contained in the ledgers with Isaac. In the course of their ruminations, Isaac lifts one hand in a gesture reminiscent of Sam Fathers and witnesses to a whole history of the South:

[A]s the stereopticon condenses into one instantaneous field the myriad minutia of its scope, so did that slight and rapid gesture establish in that small cramped and cluttered twilight room not only the ledgers but the whole plantation in its mazed and intricate entirety--the land, the fields, and what they represented in terms of cotton ginned and sold, the men and women whom they fed and clothed and even paid a little

cash money at Christmas-time...that whole edifice intricate and complex and founded upon injustice and erected by ruthless rapacity. (298)

The plantation ledgers contain the brazen record of human commodification as it is reduced in the plantation system in its "mazed and intricate entirety." The ledgers stand simultaneously as the site where the mimetic and the poietic converge; the ledgers are record to be read and hieroglyph to be interpreted. In this experience of the ledgers, Isaac learns three important facts about the nature of history which will, in turn, inform his subsequent actions: (1) He learns that history is fundamentally obscure as he and Cass speculate on the motives of Old Carothers: "*But there must have been love* he thought" (270). All human desires remain clouded and resist simple understanding and interpretation. (2) Notwithstanding this obscurity, he learns that there is a freedom in history, a freedom to choose good or ill. When Isaac says to Cass that "'Sam Fathers set me free'" (300), he intimates the possibility that evil can be canceled out in true freedom so that the good may become the rule of reality and not evil, victimage, and oppression. (3) The most difficult lesson for him to learn is that the oppressor can vanquish the oppressed, that evil, despite intentions to the contrary, can triumph over the good. This revelation centers his apocalyptic view; Isaac wants justice, a justice rendered on history. But this is a perspective which can only be seen with a view outside of history. Isaac achieves this vision by stepping into the wilderness, a markless place, out of the

dominant political order. Only then are the evils of slavery and incest impressed on him in a unique way. When Isaac sees these bald facts of history, he automatically patterns them in order to make them understood, to make them not merely debilitating, as would be the temptation, but enabling. This patterning by Isaac assumes the form of biblical myth, as his understanding of the world is constantly recast in biblical terms.

This biblical understanding of history is evident in the way Isaac reads and interprets the various discourses that he encounters. Roberto González Echevarría contends that the novel recounts the contact with non-literary forms, particularly with the language of law, of natural science and anthropology (33) and that "the relationships that the narrative [of the novel] establishes with non-literary forms of discourse are much more productive and determining than those it has with its own tradition, with other forms of literature, or with the brute factuality of history" (ix). The primary non-literary form significant in the Latin American novel is the archive, González Echevarría asserts. The archive is a repository, or one might say, "mausoleum of all hope and desire," of the dominant discourse, of what the culture views as illustrative of its past, and its origins. As a substitute for memory, it collects the ostensible content of history. The analogue of the archive in *Go Down Moses* is the commissary, with its "ranked shelves of tobacco and overalls and bottled medicine and thread and plow bolts"

(255) and all of the sundry devices of culture and "the old ledgers clumsy and archaic in size and shape" (256). The commissary is the image of captive history and dominant discourse which, when encountered, must be either accepted or rejected. The commissary acts like a moral hothouse; its presence is too strong, its air too pungent.

When the archive is analyzed, it delivers a negative message, González Echevarría explains. In citing the influence of Foucault he states that he wishes "to retain...the negative, proscriptive element of his Archive, because interdiction, that is negation, is at the beginning of the law, hence of writing and of the novel" (33).

González Echevarría continues,

The dispersive quality of [the] Archive is found in the modern novel's apparent grab-bag approach to history, its endemic power to negate previous narrative forms from which it takes texts rather than continuities; the power, in short, to question received knowledge and its ideological coagulations as identity, culture, educational institutions, even language, or perhaps better, ultimately, language itself. By letting loose the arcana, by breaking open the safe, the novel-Archive unleashes a ghostly procession of figures of negation, inhabitants of the fissures and cracks which hover around the covenant of writing and law. (34)

The past is rarely "recollected in tranquility" but breaks through in moments of crisis and decision where the reader must re-sort the "arcana" of the archive into an ordered whole. The novel articulates a discourse, a past, that must be cast off in a "ghostly procession of figures of negation." When Isaac reads the ledgers, this is precisely what he sees: the ghostly past enumerated in its entirety through Lucius

Quintus Carothers McCaslin, Eunice, and Tomasina and more. For Isaac this revelation "was all. He would never need look at the ledgers again nor did he; the yellowed pages in their fading and implacable succession were a part of his consciousness and would remain so forever" (271). But when Isaac looks through the patterns of history, he sees its unwritten encoding of redemption, and, by implication, his participation in that saving act.

The question of authoritative discourse is up for decision in the commissary debate, whether the authority of contract--of dominant discourse--or of community--and covenant is to have the greater legitimacy. In "Community or Contract: William Faulkner and the Dual Legacy" John H. Schaar contrasts the wilderness world and the authority it offers to that of "the why and wherefore of farms and banks" (251). The legacy condensed in the commissary ledgers is one of violence and fraud, of incest and miscegenation, and, particularly, of slavery itself. As Schaar states:

[In the plantation legacy] is the ethos of the contractarian society built on the foundation blocks of private property, individualism, and the limited interest in the welfare of the whole. Against that world stands the world of the hunt, a world built on humanly meaningful authority and a community built on interdependence, loyalty, and respect for the past. (109)

In the discussion of the inheritance of Old Carothers, Cass and Isaac debate the status of the new world. Isaac's view is unnostalgic; he realizes that the new world is not without its taint, "already tainted before any white man owned it by

what Grandfather and his kind, his fathers, had brought into the new land which He had vouchsafed them out of pity and sufferance" (259). Isaac is therefore not a Rousseauian, idealizing the state of nature and longing for a world that lies outside human imperfection. The old world brought with it, in "its corrupt and worthless twilight" (259), a curse, and it found it duplicated in the new world. But even as Isaac acknowledges the workings of history and decline, he moves away from fate, seeing a homeopathy at work, a hope that one could use "poison to slay poison" (259). But while looking for the remedy in history, Isaac knows that the process of altering history is long: "'It will be long. I have never said otherwise. But it will be alright because they will endure--'" (299). It is therefore not Isaac who is the idealist, as some criticism asserts, but Cass who is overly hopeful insofar as he thinks that the curse that the white man brought to America has been "voided and discharged" (279). For Cass, there is no debt that the present owes the past. But Isaac sees history as saga, a spiritual legacy descended from the "old free fathers" (295), continued through Old Ben, Sam Fathers, the blue dog Lion, and then falling to him, where all of the previous generations stake a claim on the present.

Ike's response to his renunciation is to take up a poietic life, a life of *techné* in carpentry,

not in mere static and hopeful emulation of the Nazarene as the young gambler buys a spotted shirt because the old gambler won in one yesterday,

but...because if the Nazarene had found
carpentering good for the life and ends...it would
be alright too for Isaac McCaslin. (309)

Ike desires more than a mere imitation, more than a "static emulation," but a poietic and creative life. In so doing Ike assumes a complex biblical typology, a "Christ figure," not in character but in patterning, not of choice, but of other compulsion, the reasons for which are only dimly apprehended by him. His purposes, the reader is told, "although simple enough in their apparent motivation, were and would always be incomprehensible to him, and his life, invincible enough in his needs, if he could have helped himself, not being the Nazarene, he would not have chosen it" (309-310). Isaac, then, not in any "static emulation," not in any figure of ethical purity, but in a sacrificial patterning, invokes a Christ typology. Isaac stands at the threshold between the old and the new, and makes his choice to stand on the side of the new order and of the sufferings of the generations to come who will set the parameters of the myth.

When Isaac decides on his state of life he takes a wife, "an only child, a small girl yet curiously bigger than she seemed at first, solider perhaps, with dark eyes and a passionate heart-shaped face" (311), with whom he enjoys a brief period of harmony and solidarity, where "in the sharing they became one: for that while, one: for that little while at least, one: indivisible" (311). Like many of the women characters in the novel, Isaac's wife remains unnamed and barely asserted in the narrative. The reader knows her only

through an act of refusal in her denial to Isaac of an heir in the bedroom scene where she tries to extract a promise from Isaac to reassume the plantation. Yet, in her refusal, she unwittingly participates in Isaac's destiny, a destiny as an uncle that he does not fully desire. The love that he has chosen is refined in the fire of denial, of not having, of "not shooting" when he could shoot, of not possessing what everyone else thinks ought to be his. In a sense, Isaac's failed marriage is a consequence of his innocence, his idea that there could be a repetition of the original unity of man and woman and that it can be a perduring reality. For Isaac, the scene in the bedroom, with both parties aware of their nakedness and with his wife as a surrogate temptress, is a repetition of the Garden after the Fall. From this Isaac learns bitterly that "[w]e were all born lost" (314), and an unbridgeable gulf arises between him and his wife as the scene concludes with her disturbing cachinnation. In this vignette the reader realizes that Isaac, at this point, is captive of his own innocence, and that any quest for a literal unity and wholeness can only be briefly realized.

Isaac displays not only a Christ figuration, but is also a version of the biblical Isaac who is bound and loosened, and, in the political implications of his actions, is a type of David who conquers his Goliath. In Isaac and Cass, just as in the biblical David and Saul, two different images of the polity are represented, two different routes for America. Just as Saul cuts himself off from the spirits of the land as

the Witch of Endor tells him, Cass sees the image of the Great Buck with Ike, but chooses not to act on what it signifies. David, the model of the good ruler, is motivated by love more than mere goodness or political ends. Isaac reconfigures David in that his desire is illuminated through denial, of not taking what could be his, a drama crystalized in the discussion with Cass about Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." In a similar act of love, denial and creative potency, Isaac acts out his renunciation of the plantation legacy.

The last section of "The Bear" is set when Isaac is eighteen, three years before he renounces his plantation legacy, and two years after the death of Old Ben, Sam, and Lion. When he returns to the woods to meet Boon, he finds the place where Sam, Lion and Old Ben are buried, a spot where "the earth began to rise faintly," marked out by four concrete markers, the "place where dissolution itself was a seething turmoil of ejaculation, tumescence conception and birth, and death did not exist" (327). For Isaac this is a new garden, a "dispossessed garden" where there is no death, notwithstanding the serpent that he acknowledges. This garden scene follows immediately upon his failed marriage garden and contains the image of wholeness that he will carry with him.

Isaac reconfirms the ancestral trace in the wilderness sensing that "[Sam] probably knew [he] was in the woods [that] morning long before [he] got [there]" (328). When he sees a rattlesnake, "the old one, ancient and accursed about

the earth" (329) he stands with one hand raised and speaks "the old tongue which Sam had spoken that day without premeditation either: 'Chief,' he said: 'Grandfather'" (330). In this gesture, Isaac confirms his ancestral line, following with Sam Fathers, a counter-story to western history. In the invocation of the ancestor, the "wise old man" figure adjusts the West's sense of itself. As a "dynamic" culture, the West has no place for the static figure of the shaman. Isaac has carved out that place and attested to its propagation in his simultaneous salute to Sam and to the rattlesnake.

Contrasted with Isaac's vision of place and the ancestor is Boon Hoggenbeck, with his "queerly hysterical beating of metal on metal," who exhibits the "frantic abandon of a madman" (330), and shouts, "Get out of here! Dont touch them! Dont touch a one of them! They're mine!" (330). Boon embodies an alternate vision of America--frantic, rapacious and possessive--a vision largely realized as the novel projects forward fifty-two years in "Delta Autumn."

viii. Critique and Prescription in "Delta Autumn"

In "Delta Autumn," the novel performs a critique of itself--a critique more trenchant than any of its detractors could perform. This critique proceeds on three levels: It is, first of all, a critique of America, particularly in its valuation of women and feminine symbols. Second, it is a critique of the novel itself, of its dialogic form and structure. The proposition that language and action can be populated with the intentions of others, that language is a

mode, not just of communication, not just of telling a story, but of furthering common purposes, of creating a weave, a text, where conflicting discourses can be situated with brilliance and distinction, and at the same time be a part of one larger story, is under question. Third, the novel's main carrier of the action, with action understood as that "movement of spirit" which unfolds itself in suffering and splendor, comes under examination. Now "Uncle Ike," the "little grandfather," enacts his role as displaced person destined to witness to the repetition of history. In a series of near-fatal accusations from Roth and his mistress, Uncle Ike, like a dethroned and dispossessed king, is left naked, lying under the blankets, defenseless, and pathetic.

As the hunters set out for their encampment, now deeper and deeper into the woods, they debate the meaning and myth of America and its capacity to further the good. Roth, the inheritor of the plantation, with "the youngest face of them all, aquiline, saturnine, a little ruthless, the face of his ancestor too, tempered a little, altered a little" (337), is cynical and manifests an easy pessimism about the fate of the political order. Only Ike alleviates the mood, striking the sparks of hope and generosity when he observes that "[t]his country is a little mite stronger than any one man or group of men, outside of it, or even inside of it either" (338). Ike realizes that the strength of America does not come from the tinny patriotism that Roth holds up, exhibited by "singing God bless America in bars at midnight and wearing

dime-store flags in our lapels" (338). For Ike the value lies in its poietic substructure, in a politics that resists both the liberal and conservative lines, offering an alternative to and critique of both.

But the men, that once noble caste of hunters, are jaded, betrayed by a random uninterest in the course of conversation and the symbolic character of the hunt. In the progress of their speculations of whether there are any convictions which the society commonly holds, the subject of "does" surfaces:

"Its a good time to mention does," the old man said. "Does and fawns both. The only fighting anywhere that ever had anything of God's blessing on it has been when men fought to protect does and fawns. If its going to come to fighting, that's a good thing to mention and remember, too."

"Haven't you discovered in--how many years more than seventy is it?--that women and children are one thing there's never any scarcity of?" Edmonds said. (339)

In Roth's scornful off-hand remark, the violation of women is renewed with intensified power. Roth feels fully justified in not protecting "does and fawns"; in fact, as the reader learns later, he does kill a doe, despite the "man with a badge." One realizes in Roth's statement and action that society is capable of doing anything; the fact that there is legal prohibition is immaterial. If there is no inner policing device to tell men not to kill does, then there is little hope that it will not happen. As a result, the consequences of the apocalyptic breakdown that "Delta Autumn" represents are borne almost entirely by the women.

Despite his failed marriage, Uncle Ike is the only one who understands the loss of feminine symbolism in culture and the threat that this poses to everybody. But Ike's wilderness, "his mistress and his wife" (326), is now effaced from history, not so much destroyed as having receded, "retreated not in minutes from the last spread of gravel but in years" (341), its memory a victim of the ravages of men and time. The surface of the earth is now scored with highways and railways, and the annual hunt, once the symbol of renewal, has decayed into a pale carbon copy of its former substance, no longer the "best of all breathing and forever the best of all listening" (192) but the crass ruminations and deft and scornful avoidances of Roth and his coterie. In its negative action, the hunt repeats the purposes of the hunt in the first story, "Was," and in its pessimism, stands in dialogue with "Pantaloon in Black." The landscape is bleak and apocalyptic, with all of its figures blasted by circumstance.

The victimization of women is augmented in the abandonment of Roth's mistress, the one who must bear the unfortunate repetition of evil in the genealogical line. She is not only scorned by Roth, first on the road as they pass, and then at the camp, but is doubly rejected in Ike's seemingly cold denunciation of her. And finally, the story ends in the report from Legate that the deer that Roth shot was a doe, in violation of law and all of the codes of the hunter.

Thus in "Delta Autumn" Ike witnesses to the recurring nightmare of history, a history which seems destined to be robbed of even the least shard of fulfillment. What Faulkner sees, and what Ike participates in, as Mircea Eliade has remarked, is the recognition that "the historical moment, despite the possibilities of escape it offers contemporaries, can never, in its entirety, be anything but tragic, pathetic, unjust, chaotic, as any moment that heralds the final catastrophe must be" (Eliade, *Cosmos* 131). Like the apocalyptist who gives up on the historical order, Ike can only wait, with diminished passion, for a redemption, though it is a hope of which he himself seems to have despaired.

The apocalyptic landscape is magnified in language where all the actors seem to speak at cross-purposes, with everyone telling their story, their version of events, but without any of these stories really coming into contact with each other. Throughout the narrative, the language is peppered with a bleak humor and cynical laughter, and like Legate, many "seemed to be speaking to no one" (337), with words tossed into the vacuum of inertia and despair. The hope of a restoration of community is lost as language ceases to be even a mode of communication, with each utterance standing in isolation, and with Ike's language and position completely eccentric to the world in which he finds himself. The novel thus undergoes an inner critique, a critique of its dialogic structures and patterns. In "Delta Autumn," all utterances stand alone, deracinated of meaning and force, as language

loses its ability to foster either memory or desire. Quite the reverse of engendering any sort of mythic renewal as it did in the middle section of the novel, language truncates the past and the future, and even in the present loses its communicative function. Even Ike McCaslin's voice has changed as John T. Matthews has noted, "Ike's voice has been ravaged by a career of eloquent silence....Ike's words are only husks of the probing, supple speculations of his commissary performance" (266). And when the men are together, Ike speaks, but no one listens in the surrounding laughter. This inability of language to further common ends is part of the apocalyptic content of the narrative. Humanity is incapable of speaking the normal tones of love, and has lost the hope that anyone can say anything of value to another.

This emptying of language and understanding is manifested in Ike's encounter with Roth's mistress when Ike hears his own history rehearsed, in all of its imperfection, loaded with the accusation that he is responsible for Roth's shortcomings: "You spoiled him," Roth's mistress accuses Ike, "You and Uncle Lucas and Aunt Mollie. But mostly you" (360). In this vignette which encircles Roth and his mistress, both the harmed and the harmer are equally worthy of pity, but in return, both are equally accusatory toward Ike. When Ike observes, in an act of generosity directed at Roth, that

There are good men everywhere, at all times. Most men are. Some are just unlucky, because most men

are a little better than their circumstances give them a chance to be. (345).

In a feeble gesture, Ike tries to redeem the situation and his company, assuming the best of them despite their insensate state. To Ike's offering, Roth responds:

"So you've lived almost eighty years," Edmonds said. "And that's what you finally learned about the other animals you lived among. I suppose the question to ask you is, where have you been all the time you were dead?" (345)

In a similar retort, Roth's mistress, after Ike has proffered his advice to her to go north and "marry a black man," shoots back: "'Old man...Have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you dont remember anything about love?'" (363)

This statement, which goes to the heart of Ike's whole life, says less about either Ike or Roth's mistress than about the lack of understanding and communication among all of the speakers in the story.

For the band of hunters and Roth's mistress, Ike has become an "ancestor," but one, as Roth says, that is already dead. The ancestor is a dead presence for white culture; it is deaf to the voice of the past, to the wilderness, to their ancestral and spiritual guides. "Delta Autumn," therefore, is not so much about Ike's frigid pronouncements as it is about a culture that has lost, seemingly irretrievably, its senses, its proclivity to speak, to hear, to see, and to feel.

Out of this world where language is emptied, Ike's castigation erupts and lends a disquieting presence to the narrative. When Ike hears from a victim--Roth's unnamed

mistress--the very thing that by his act of relinquishment he has hoped to avoid,

[h]e sprang, still seated even, flinging himself backward onto one arm awry-haired, glaring. Now he understood what it was she had brought with her, what old Isham had already told him by sending the youth to bring her in to him--the pale lips, the skin pallid and dead-looking yet not ill, the dark and tragic and foreknowing eyes. *Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America, he thought. But not now! Not now!* he cried, not loud, in a voice of amazement, pity and outrage: "You're a nigger!" (360-361)

In his tone he is prophetic, and in his substance he is apocalyptic: he excoriates the present, and gives up the hope of history redeeming itself. Abraham Heschel states that the prophet is a figure who recognizes the arresting force of history and who intensifies one's responsibility for it:

The prophet is intent on intensifying responsibility, is impatient of excuse, contemptuous of pretense and self-pity. His tone, rarely sweet or caressing, is frequently consoling or disburdening; his words are often slashing, even horrid--designed to shock rather than to edify. (7)

Ike excoriates Roth's mistress, the pattern of violation, and stands in rebuke, not so much of her, but of himself. This is the most powerful critique that "Delta Autumn" performs on the novel: the critique of Ike McCaslin himself. Ike's rebuke in saying "a nigger," jarring the reader's sensibilities, is an inadvertent acknowledgement that he too is in history and not outside it. Despite his intentions to the contrary, it is not possible for Ike to play a fully adversarial role in culture. Like most characters in novels, Ike is possessed of a mythic or apocalyptic spirit only at

moments of fullness; at other times he bears all the imperfections of history. By relinquishing his inheritance, Ike thinks he has paid his debt, but "Delta Autumn" asserts that repairing history is not a simple task.

The prophet bears witness to the repetitions of history, and yet insists on their amelioration in history.

This is what the prophets discovered. History is a nightmare. There are more scandals, more acts of corruption, than are dreamed of in philosophy.... the prophets insist on redemption. The way man acts is a disgrace and it must not go on forever. Together with condemnation, the prophets offer a promise.

The inner history of Israel is a history of waiting for God, of waiting for His arrival.
(Heschel 181)

This act of waiting is the only recourse of a sense of linear time. And yet Ike is apocalyptic in content when he reiterates that "*Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America*" (361), this echoing a similar lament in "The Bear," "*It will be long*" (299). The hunt has turned brutal, and love and responsibility have fled as Ike realizes the sufferings and travails that the newer generations, the ones who are attuned to the future, will face.

Yet in this narrative nadir, there emerges an act of affirmation that stands out against the dull ground. In the final giving of the horn to the inheritor of the Beauchamp line, Ike completes the relinquishing of his patrimony. Language gives way to gesture, as Ike touches the woman in an act of recognition, as if to anoint her and her son with the only thing that he knows is of value--the abiding presence of

the ancestor, and the memory of the old wild life. "He didn't grasp it, he merely touched it--the gnarled, bloodless, bone-light bone-dry old man's fingers touching for a second the smooth young flesh where the strong old blood ran after its long lost journey back to home. 'Tennie's Jim,' he said. 'Tennie's Jim'" (362). This gesture, where a white man touches a black woman in an act, not of violence or domination, but of love as Ike passes on to the new generations the patrimony of the past, is perhaps unique in American literature. Ike demonstrates an empathy, not only with the woman and her son, but with the sufferings that these rough new generations will inevitably have to endure. When Ike touches her, he invokes the memory of Tennie's Jim, who, one remembers, witnessed with Ike the death of Old Ben, and was the one whom Ike sought unsuccessfully to give the \$1000 inheritance from Buck and Buddy. With the stimulation of this memory, Ike asks the woman to get General Compson's horn:

"The horn!" he said harshly. "The horn." She went and got it, thrust the money into the slicker's side pocket as if it were a rag, a soiled handkerchief, and lifted down the horn, the one which General Compson had left him in his will, covered with the unbroken skin from a buck's shank and bound with silver. (362-363)

Ike thus completes the act of relinquishment late in life in an act which acknowledges the long-postponed inheritance due to Tennie's Jim and which tries to convey and recoup in the coming generation the ancestral power of the past. In so doing, Ike makes a second thought about history and a second

gesture toward the future. Thus, even at this point of desperation, a hope is uncovered which can project itself into the future darkness. As Eliade has remarked,

The tendency toward devaluation of the contemporary moment should not be regarded as a sign of pessimism. On the contrary, it reveals an excess of optimism, for, in the deterioration of the contemporary situation, at least a portion of mankind saw signs of foretelling the regeneration that must necessarily follow. (Eliade, *Cosmos* 132)

On the face of the story, this is clearly not an easy optimism, but it is one which leaves the action open to the future. In the passing over of the silver horn, the failure of language is converted to gesture, ceremony, to a poietic and sensate touch. In that last act, Ike passes on his ravaged kingdom to the unnamed woman and her unknown son. Uncle Ike, finally, does not close off possibility as he leaves the stage for others to take over the last act in "Go Down, Moses."

ix. Simultaneity and Translation in "Go Down, Moses"

Only in the last story, "Go Down, Moses," the story which is entitled the same as the novel and which acts as a microcosm of the novel as a whole, do the complex weave of biblical typology and its significance for the American myth come together. It is the only story whose title is explicitly biblical, whose words are taken from the Negro spiritual about freedom and liberation and so forecast the suggestion of a usable future.

"Go Down, Moses" focuses the whole novel through a dialogical pattern which relates all the other stories of the book. As in "Was," with the elaborate courtships and the interventions of Miss Sibbey, in "Go Down, Moses" a community encounters a crisis of love where the action is brought to efficacy by women; as in "The Fire and the Hearth," where "Molly" assumes a central place in renegotiating relationships, in the last story, "Mollie" brings the community together as her cultural significance and creative capacities expand; as in "Pantaloon in Black" where Rider is lynched, in the last story, a person of heroic potential, in the figure of Samuel Beauchamp, dies; as in "The Old People," where the story centers on the wisdom of Sam Fathers, in "Go Down, Moses," a whole community has to come to hear the voice of the ancestor; as in "The Bear," where the encounter with the dominant discourse and the making of history in the ledger pages is encountered, in the last story, the ledger pages are traded for the newspaper, and men's history is traded for women's; as in "Delta Autumn," where the story analyzes the efficacy of inheritance and modes of communication, in "Go Down, Moses" the nature of what is passed on is scrutinized and the modes of understanding that exist outside the normal range of language are examined.

The story recounts the death and homecoming of Samuel Worsham Beauchamp, "Butch," the grandson of Mollie Beauchamp who was exiled to Chicago by Roth for breaking into the commissary. Gavin Stevens remembers that, "it was Edmonds

who had actually sent the boy to Jefferson in the first place: he had caught the boy breaking into his commissary store and had ordered him off the place and had forbidden him ever to return" (373). Samuel, therefore, "poaches" on the dominant power, symbolized in his breaking into the commissary, and enacts the role of the thief in trying to steal away some of the power which is due him. In this hermetic trope, compounded in Samuel's facility with numbers, he calls to mind his great-grandfather, Tomey's Turl's actions in "Was." In the moments before his death, Samuel gives his identity to a census taker, an act which subsequently confirms Mollie's clairvoyance when she visits Gavin Stevens to help him find her grandson. When Mollie comes to Steven's office, it is her business to "find her boy": "'Roth Edmonds sold my Benjamin,'" she says, "'Sold him in Egypt. Pharaoh got him--'" (371). Through this ceremonial and cryptic refrain, Mollie introduces a complex biblical typology.

Mollie refers to her grandson, Samuel, as Benjamin, calling to mind Benjamin, son of Jacob, the story of whom is recounted in Genesis. The odd twist in this invocation is that it was not Benjamin who was sold into Egypt by his brothers, but his brother Joseph. Mollie is therefore enacting her own defamiliarization of the Genesis story, aligning the figure of Samuel Beauchamp with both Benjamin and Joseph through the vignette from the Bible where primogeniture is overthrown and the rejected triumph.

Further, both Benjamin and Joseph are grandsons of Isaac through Jacob and Rachel, thus connecting, on a figural level, Isaac McCaslin with Samuel Beauchamp.³²

The biblical Joseph, sold into Egypt by his brothers, rises to power through his ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and is destined to be the brother who will be unrecognized by the other brothers when they go to Egypt, at Jacob's behest, to get food to eat when famine strikes their land. This theme of recognition of brotherhood is central to the biblical story as well as to Faulkner's narrative. Samuel is the stranger and thief who must be recognized as a brother to the community, a community which has resisted the recognition of spiritual kinships. When Mollie tells Gavin Stevens that she is staying with Hamp Worsham, Mollie's brother, we are told that,

he [Stevens] was not surprised. He had known Hamp Worsham all his life, though he had never seen the old Negress before. Even if he had, he still would not have been surprised. They were like that. You could know two of them for years; they might have even worked for you for years, bearing different names. Then suddenly you learn by pure chance that they are brothers or sisters. (371-372).

³²Erich Neumann in his essay "Chagall and the Bible," in explicating one of Chagall's paintings, notes the distinctiveness of Joseph as a figure. "And Joseph was not just one of the sons, not just someone who had been cast into a pit and raised to high office in Egypt, but a man who from his youth up had lived with dreams of the godhead, and now in his maturity was preparing the future destiny of his family and of a whole people" (124). Neumann continues to compare Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers to the parable of the prodigal son, an analogy that is particularly apt in the Samuel/Joseph figuration.

The community surrounding Mollie is the only one which has a notion of "brotherhood," and it is the quest of Mollie to bring the community to a realization of these bonds in a larger order of relations. If the first story, "Was," poses the question of the nature of kinship as it existed in the past, "Go Down, Moses" closes the novel with a similar discussion of kinship--spiritual kinship--as the line of descent is reprogrammed for the future.

When Samuel Beauchamp is brought home he is referred to in his "catafalque" as "the slain wolf" (382). This complements and connects Samuel to the biblical Benjamin through Jacob's prophecy to his sons, "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf, in the morning devouring the prey, and at evening dividing the spoil" (Gen. 49:27). To associate Samuel with Benjamin intensifies the figural analogy, and to see him as a "slain wolf" associates "Butch" as a sacrificial victim for the new covenant that is formed in Jefferson through Mollie's vision.

In the biblical narrative, Joseph secretly places a silver cup in Benjamin's sack to test his brothers' love toward Benjamin and to see if they would repeat the action of rejection that Joseph's brothers inflicted on him. When the brothers find the cup in Benjamin's sack, he is accused of being a thief, just as Samuel has the tag of thief pinned on him. Just as Benjamin had a cup in his sack without knowing it, Samuel Worsham Beauchamp has an inheritance as the youngest of the Beauchamp line that he does not know, the

inheritance that Ike never received from Hubert Beauchamp. The uncovering of this detail propels the story backward to the commissary episode in "The Bear" where Ike discovers that his silver cup, the cup that contained his Beauchamp inheritance, has been replaced by a coffee pot containing mere "coppers." Yet this was to be his inheritance from his godfather, Hubert Beauchamp, part of the "lares and penates" of the family:

no pale sentence or paragraph scrawled in cringing fear of death by a weak and trembling hand as last desperate sop flung backward at retribution, but a Legacy, a Thing, possessing weight to the hand and bulk to the eye and even audible: a silver cup filled with gold pieces and wrapped in burlap and sealed with his godfather's ring in the hot wax, which (intact still) even before his Uncle Hubert's death and long before his own majority, when it would be his, had become not only a legend but one of the family lares. (300-301)

Just as the translation of the lares and the penates are necessary in the epic act of reclamation, here a portion of the lares, the silver cup, which had never descended to Ike, becomes a part of the figural patrimony that belongs to Samuel Beauchamp. That Samuel possesses figurally the silver cup completes the total handing-over of the McCaslin and Beauchamp legacy to the Beauchamp descendants, and complements the gesture of handing over General Compson's horn to the grandson of Tennie's Jim in "Delta Autumn."

The whole action of the story is set into motion by the clairvoyance of Mollie, who sees what no one else sees. Only through her vision is the community enabled to set aside its

reservations and participate in a ritual of grief and remembrance for the sacrificial wolf, Samuel.

Mollie's clairvoyance extends to the world of numbers as the entire novel concludes as it began with a strange and baffling hieroglyphic numerology: Samuel gets in trouble for the game of numbers; the census taker enumerates and confirms Samuel's identity which, in turn, enables Samuel to come home; Mollie initiates the quest for the money to bring Samuel home as she keeps intoning "Sold my Benjamin, Sold him in Egypt."

Just as Mollie has the capacity to make numbers sacred hieroglyphs, she has the ability to see the entire structure of time differently. Mollie possesses a "simultaneity" of experience, seeing a unity of time and place, as all being at once. Through a figural imagination, she sees Samuel as Benjamin and Joseph simultaneously; Mollie sees the past in the present and perceives its adumbrations in the future. As Nathan Scott Jr. has noted, "[In a figural representation of time] all events display a tentativeness which is consequent upon their being related to something that is dark and concealed, to something which has been promised but which is not yet present" (9). Mollie, through this renewed figural way of understanding time and space, performs an act of poiesis in accounting for the occulted dimension of reality in the hidden narrative of Samuel. Benedict Anderson has commented on the concept of simultaneity in modernity:

What has come to take the place of the medieval conception of simultaneity-along-time is, to borrow again from Benjamin, an idea of "homogeneous, empty time," in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar.

Why this transformation should be so important for the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth-century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for re-presenting the kind of imagined community that is the nation. (Anderson 30)

Mollie is the locus of this modern simultaneity, the "transverse, cross-time," as well as the more ancient version of the figural. In sensing before anybody knows that tragedy has befallen Samuel in distant Chicago, Mollie evidences the simultaneity demonstrated in the consciousness of the nation at the same time as she manifests a figural simultaneity which "re-presents" a new imagined community, focused in the new covenant which she is poised to initiate. As Anderson remarks on the simultaneity of the nation state:

The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation....An American will never meet...[many of his fellow Americans]...has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity. (Anderson 31)

Mollie has the simultaneous understanding of temporality in that she knows that her Benjamin is in "Egypt" and that this Egypt is at once Chicago and the allegorical Egypt of oppression.

Taken as such, Mollie will write the new history, will get it published in the newspaper and so make it known. This history is a "woman's history," a different version of events than that recorded by men in the ledgers, those "yellowed pages scrawled in fading ink by the hand first of [Ike's] grandfather, and then of his father and uncle" (261).

Mollie's version of history turns away from the inevitability of doom to a more hopeful interpretation of events, turning the tragedy of the sacrifice of Samuel, her grandchild, to an epic commemoration. Helmutt Koopmann has noted that the simultaneous apprehension of time draws on a woman's perspective of history:

[W]orld history as determined by women is the opposite of that course of history that always tends to end with fatal consequences. Such a view is less indicative of a fatalistic insight into the immutability of masculine history than of a hope for a change of this history granting women a voice in determining its course. But the insight into the fatality of male-determined history and into the possibility of a more human history assumes precisely what the novel attempts to describe: the simultaneity of the unsimultaneous, the knowledge of the fatal course of mankind's history that is being rewritten here so that it may develop differently in the future....Therefore, a process with an optimistic result is described in the novel despite all the fatal periods of masculine-determined history.

History is being rewritten in a feminine way. Real history, of course, does not change; it remains a history of suppression and aberrations, of lack of freedom and tyranny, an inhuman history through the millennia that is neither revocable nor changeable. Only its interpretation may be corrected; thus the novel has only one goal--to reinterpret conventional history by advancing its true version. (86-87)

Mollie takes on the role of the epic poet/historian who is responsible for the recording of the deeds and sufferings of the race as she insists, despite a reluctant editor and uncomprehending Gavin Stevens, that her version of events be placed in the newspaper.

This act of translation of the catafalque of Samuel Beauchamp is accomplished with the aid of the entire community as Gavin Stevens cajoles his fellow citizens, passing "from store to store and office to office about the square--merchant and clerk, proprietor and employee, doctor dentist lawyer and barber--with his set and rapid speech" (378) to contribute to Samuel's homecoming. Stevens is the public figure, whose "serious vocation was a twenty-two-year-old unfinished translation of the Old Testament back into classic Greek" (371). When Stevens and the editor return to town, they are poised to engage in twin acts of "translation" so as to make known the event as the editor acts on Mollie's wishes to put the whole story in the paper, and Stevens returns to his desk, presumably to resume his translation of the Bible.

The act of translation, as Walter Benjamin says, is the act of moving from life to afterlife, from representation to the poietic apprehension of the object. Translation must inscribe in the public consciousness the Old Testament figural and simultaneous understanding of events, those things which Mollie has discovered. But that Stevens's translation is one "back into classic Greek," is a curious

pastime. On one level, it seems to be an act of retreat to an arcane project, a strange hangover from the German philological tradition in which he has, presumably, been educated. His is an image, not of wholeness like Sam Fathers, but of an act of seeking wisdom. On this level, his translation project seems misguided and he must be called out of his "vocation" to witness to Mollie, who is incomprehensible to his understanding, but unerringly right to his heart. Gavin Stevens, "Phi Beta Kappa, Harvard, Ph.D, Heidelberg" (371) would seem to be the proper witness, but not the active maker or recorder of the history, an act left to the newspaper editor. Stevens' inadequacy is manifested as a failure of empathy as he hurriedly leaves Miss Worsham's house because it is not his grief; it is not his story. The story that will be remembered is Mollie's story, the one that will be published in the newspaper and be popular and accessible, not arcane as Gavin Stevens's translation.

And yet, this translation project seems to manifest a positive value. Stevens, in translating from English to the Greek, is undertaking a translation of a translation; his major task is the reconfiguration of language into a form that is not the original set version, but rather some strange paraphrase of an Old Testament text in a language that only he can understand. In this capacity, he is a figuralized representation of Isaac (and Mollie) who uniquely see a biblical and specifically apocalyptic history patterned over secular history.

In a larger sense, the last story performs an act of translation over the novel. Just as the novel begins before Ike is born, so the novel ends after he recedes from view and offers an examination of the effects of his decision in the commissary. Ike is a vanishing narrator, a guide to the movement of the novel, like a Virgil to a Dante, who recedes at the end to allow the reader to come to a point of vision. "Go Down, Moses," therefore, stands in dialogue to "Was" as pre-life stands to afterlife. The novel reconfigures its action and modifies an historical past as the memory of Butch Beauchamp, a supposed criminal, is memorialized in the community's history. Mollie assumes a central role for the community, not like a prophet, but a sibyl who can apprehend dimly the form of the future. With Mollie, the novel rises into "great time" as she fulfills Isaac's weak hope of a communal response to a crisis.

As the novel projects itself into the future through the act of translation, the novel simultaneously recovers its beginnings. Faulkner, in his frontispiece, dedicates the novel to "Caroline Barr [,] Mississippi (1840-1940)," herself a type of figuralized Mollie. Just as Benedict Anderson remarks that the tombs of unknown soldiers carry "ghostly *national* imaginings" (17), the tomb of Caroline Barr as inscription to the whole novel, enunciates, not a mere pious gesture to one who gave a "family a fidelity without stint or calculation of recompense and to [Faulkner's] childhood an immeasurable devotion and love," but a memorial to the

sufferings of those upon whom a new myth of America is imagined.

VI. Conclusion:
Myth and the Angel of a People

Dionysius, the Areopagite, wrote that "He has set the borders of the nations according to His angels." It is these angels, each one the genius of some race about to be unfolded, that are the founders of intellectual traditions; and as lovers understand in their first glance all that is to befall them, and as poets and musicians see the whole work in its first impulse, so races prophesy at their awakening whatever the generations that are to prolong their traditions shall accomplish in detail....New races understand instinctively, because the future cries in their ears, that the old revelations are insufficient, and that all life is revelation beginning in miracle and enthusiasm, and dying out as it unfolds itself in what we have mistaken for progress.

(Yeats, "Theatre" 171)

In this passage, Yeats gives us a revelation, the revelation of the nature of myth as embodied in the angel of a people. The substance of what "races prophesy at their awakening" and what subsequent generations "shall accomplish in detail," one might say, is the seed and fruit of a new myth, enacted as a "shared spiritual response given to a people at a time of their becoming a people" (Cowan, "Myth" 14), dramatized in a "constellation of compelling metaphors" (Slotkin, *Regeneration* 7). The novel, as it develops in its poietic form, acts as the seed for this myth: it contains all the genetic material that will in a later time enflesh itself in the material medium in which people live and which we call culture. That this seed live and not die is the hope that the novel holds out as an ever-present possibility.

"All great works," Milan Kundera observes, "(precisely because they are great) contain something unachieved" (Art, 65). One of the frustrations of *Go Down, Moses* is that it does not resound in unqualified success. The problems that the novel raises seem unresolved, the action that Isaac McCaslin initiates seems incomplete, Gavin Stevens seems too ambivalent, the positive ascriptions seem timidly presented. Faulkner does not give the reader the fully fleshed out myth that, it seems, ought be articulated. This grand underachievement in Faulkner stems in part from the realization that in history the sufferings are real and the triumphs are few when patterned in any type of epic venture. In these very shortcomings, these faults, are the seeds that a great novel has which constitute the part that can rise to afterlife in its own critical history and, eventually, to an ultimate judgment.

America stands between two myths: one of "mythomimesis," rooted in imitations and counterfeits, and another of mythopoesis, founded in new cultural forms. That the old revelations are insufficient, says Yeats, is a standing testament of the power of the novel to respond to suffering and generate a new path out of oppression and into freedom. To do this, the novel recalls an image of value and remakes it into an image of poesis. All must be made new, absorbed to a mythic structure that binds a people to its highest purposes.

This same process of mythopoesis that Faulkner initiated in *Go Down, Moses* is occurring in a myriad number of novels throughout the world. They are the epic calling of the future generations, the seeds of Isaac which in their diversity populate the various tribes of the earth. The novel is their particular tool for discovery, for uncovering and recovering the variegated relations that define a community.

This study began with the assertion that the novel had an atavistic form and the way in which the term was initially intended was to refer to the recurrence of characteristics and traits in the present generation. In *Go Down, Moses* the "old verities" resurface and life tilts towards the ritualistic and ceremonial, and all those elements of being which can bring disparate things, people, events, and times together. At the same time, however, atavism works not just on the past, but on the future. It implies a seed, a spore, a fragment of a revelation that will mature and unfold itself in the future to a race, to a people coming into consciousness, to those who have the attention of destiny, "because the future cries in their ears," as Yeats says. The call of *Go Down, Moses* is an imperative one, but, at the same time it is one received with reluctance and uncertainty. This tentativity and provisionality which is present in its initiation remains throughout the struggles and successes which the novel through its epic stirrings makes known, codifies, and transforms into a sacred narrative.

In *Go Down, Moses*, the revelation that is given to the future generations through Mollie, the sibyl of a new mythology, is the revelation of "simultaneity," a "condition in which all spaces are felt to touch each other and all times are made to touch the present" (Cowan, "America" 245). Mollie, now attuned not only to the powers of the earth, but to the resonances of the noosphere and the cry of the angel of a people, collapses the distances of chronos, and intimates the passage that all men and women can make from the *oikos* to the *ecumene*.

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Vita

Paul Richard Connell was born on November 5, 1958 in Chatham, New Brunswick, Canada. Mr. Connell was raised for the early years of his life on the ancestral homestead in Little Bartibogue. He alternately attended Catholic and public schools all of his life, first in the town of Newcastle, then at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, the Thomas More Institute in Merrimack, New Hampshire and Rome, Italy, and at the University of Dallas, in Irving, Texas. Mr. Connell received his M.A. from Louisiana State University in 1988.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

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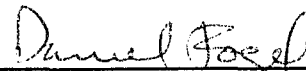
Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: Mimesis and Poiesis in the Novel: William Faulkner's
Go Down Moses and the Mythopoeic Turn in the American Imagination

Approved:



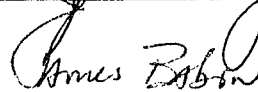
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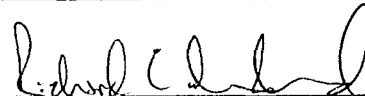



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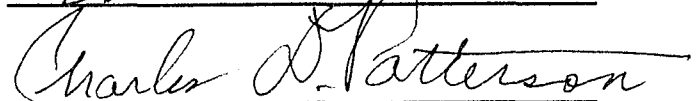












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